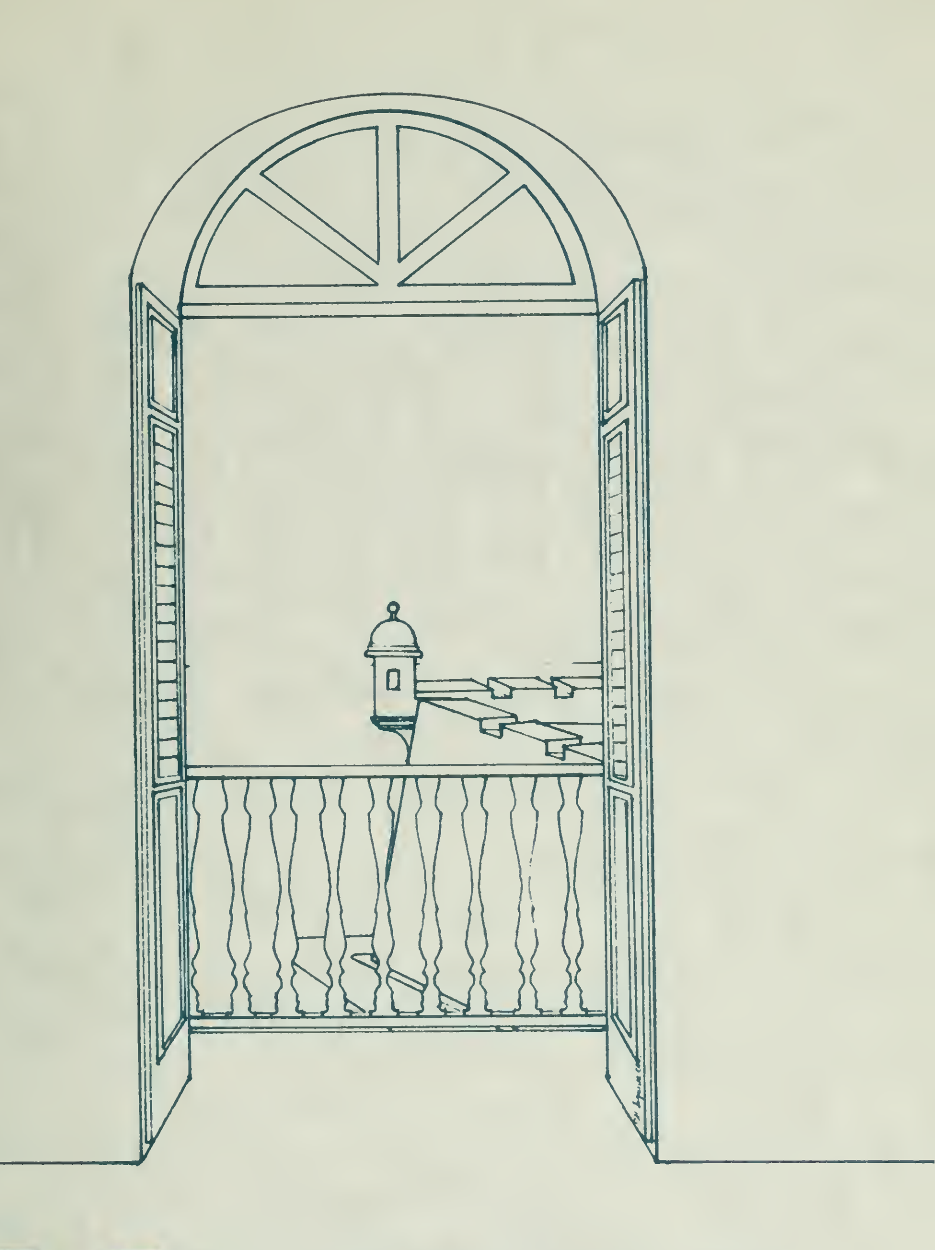


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ÍNDICE

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To Read Chicano Narrative: Commentary and Metacommentary

Those of you familiar with the work of Fredric Jameson will readily recognize the title of this presentation as an intertextual debt to his essay, "Commentary and Metacommentary."[1] In that essay, Jameson argues for a metacommentary, which is to say, an historical understanding of both interpretation and the literary text. Commentary can be loosely described as a problem solving event of translating what is implicit in a text into an explicitly meaningful discourse. For the naive reader, according to Jameson, meaning is already there, perhaps obscured, but, nonetheless, there in the text. On the other hand, metacommentary is a higher level of awareness in which the invention of the problem of interpretation is itself an area of scrutiny for the reader. In semiotic terms of the signifier-signified relationship, metacommentary can be defined as the momentary postponement of the search of meaning in order to examine the underlying pre-conditions necessary for the production of the signified. This presentation is a tentative and modest effort in that direction. I would like to address the issue of metacommentary as it relates to the critical reception of contemporary Chicano narratives. My comments are informed by the dialectical criticism of Jameson, as well as by Northrop Frye's work on narrative genres and Wolfgang Iser's theoretitcal speculations on reading.[2]

Following Jameson, I conceive of interpretations as a movement away from what is an otherwise private event, the act of reading, towards wide ideological, political, and historical horizons. J. L. Austin's performative speech act model can serve as a useful analogy for the successful reading of narrative fiction. Austin distinguishes between two forms of speech acts: constative and performative.[3] The constative utterance makes statements about facts, and must be measured against truth or falsehood. On the other hand, the performative utterance produces an action in the recipient to be measured against standards of appropriateness, of success or failure. Performative utterances occur within highly conventionalized contexts and are governed by procedures accepted by both sender and receiver to ensure successful communication. As Iser asserts, the act of reading is a performative situation in the sense that the pragmatic potential of linguistic signs involves some manipulation as responses are elicted by the verbal procedures of a narrative text.[4] Reading fictive discourse is not a constative event in the sense that the signs of a literary text do not denote an empirical referent. Even when a narrative is written in the mode of mimesis or realism, it is still a symbolic act, a fiction, that requires an ideological and a conceptual apparatus about the nature of reality. Like the performative speech act that is structured by accepted verbal procedures, the interpretation of narrative is governed by intrinsic rhetorical structures or strategies, such as narrative

point of view, characterization and dialogue, dramatized readers, plot construction, representation of reality, scenes and settings, and language and style. These strategies establish a ground of relationships, prestructure a role for the reader, and persuade the reader into acceptable responses that will ensure appropriate interpretation.[5]

Although the speech act model is a good starting point for an examination of a transactive approach to the literary text, it excludes what we have all come to accept in this increasingly politicized world: that all meaningful linguistic communication is situational, which is to say, that it is historically conditioned, culture bound, and ideological. In other words, there are certain limits imposed upon interpretation and the literary text by culture and class. Though in our shared day to day cultural practices there are still residuals from an indigenous oral past, in the rarified atmosphere of Chicano literary production and reception, the text as a cultural artifact is a Western conception, be it in the form of Anglo-American, Hispanic, Latin American, or Mexican traditions. Although every narrative from throughout the world may contain those verbal procedures outlined above, the invention of these as problems of writing and interpretaiton is historically Western.

We can begin to make our way out of the individual text towards an understanding of the historicity of Chicano narrative genres, the tautological relationship between intrinsic rhetorical structures and the ideology of the reader by examining our shared conceptions of the term "novel." Outside the literary context, the term has real sociological meaning as a commercial ploy to encourage readers to purchase the newest novel by the latest award-winning novelist. In our society, probably no other creative writing act ensures more prestige than being a novelist. In a literary context, the word is used to distinguish longer narratives from the short story, otherwise it is almost meaningless. Practically all writers, regardless of what narrative tradition they align themselves with, say they write novels. Most reviewers use the word to describe any narrative longer than one hundred pages. If we took stock of all the narrative genres published within the last two centuries, the novel would probably outnumber all others. However, contrary to what most Chicano critics and their Anglo counterparts may believe, the novel is not the only narrative form.

Some examples will illustrate the confusion. A recent bibliography, *A Decade of Chicano Literature (1970–1979): Critical Essays and Bibliography*, lists some 35 narratives, as different as Oscar Zeta Acosta's *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* (1972), Orlando Romero's *Nambé—Year One* (1976), and Edmund Villaseñor's *Macho!* (1973), under the heading of "NOVEL."[6] The editors also make the unfortunate mistake, in obeisance to the novel-centered view of narrative, of calling two autobiographies, Ernesto Galarza's *Barrio Boy* (1971) and Anthony Quinn's *The Original Sin: A Self-Portrait* (1972), "BIOGRAPHICAL NOVELS." Acosta's book has not fared any better in established journals; it has been

reviewed under biography, anthropology and sociology. As I will try to demonstrate, a more appropriate term is satire. Another recent reference volume, *A Bibliography of Criticism of Contemporary Chicano Literature*, lists a section for "PROSE FICTION."[7] This is a more satisfactory term. However, as I have tried to stress, I am opting for "NARRATIVE" because of the emphasis on the storytelling aspect of the genre, to distinguish it from poetry and drama, and because it includes empirical forms, such as the autobiography, the journal or diary, and the memoir. These are self-conceiving forms and therefore may have an imaginative or fictional element.

On the whole, the interpretation of Chicano narratives revolves around the term novel and the ideological pre-conditions necessary for novelistic discourse, such as a realistic representation of reality, a presentation of character that highlights the problematic of self and other, and a well-constructed plot. This state of affairs has led to a broad range of judgments based on one narrative form. For example, Acosta's *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* and *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (1973) have been criticized for being digressive, self indulgent and lacking structure.[8] On the other hand, if one values the norm-breaking aspect of fiction in both form and content, then his books would be "the most concerted attempt by a Chicano novelist to create a truly 'radical' art."[9] Acosta's books are truly radical, but in the sense that he reinvents another radical narrative genre, the satire. Ron Arias' *The Road to Tamazunchale* (1975) has been hailed by one critic as the Chicano novel of the new reality.[10] Its dream-phantasy narrative reality, its parody of characters and situations from cultural myths, Cervantes' Quixote, Goethe's Faust, as well as Michelangelo's David and García Márquez' short story "El ahogado más hermoso del mundo" make it, like García Márquez' *Cien años de soledad*, a rare combination of romance and satire. To add to the confusion, readers of Rudolfo A. Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972) and Romero's *Nambé—Year One* have detected in these texts narrative elements from the romance form, such as stylized magical figures, unmediated or idealized visions of nature, an ordering of events according to cyclical, mythical, or archetypal patterns, yet still use the term novel.[11]

Though Chicano literary criticism is still in its initial stages, we should begin to distinguish between narrative genres and establish structures of dominance within individual texts. In the history of narrative forms, the novel is a latecomer; it should serve us well to recall how long writers had to wait before the historical and ideological conditions were met for the possibility of the novel. Novels are still written, but for the most part they are formula narratives confined to best-seller lists and television mini-series. The present status of the novel as Jameson points out, certainly has to do with the handling of concrete historical events.[12] It would be naive to think that a writer today could have the same grasp of history and events, the same conventional vantage point of his or her nineteenth-century

counterpart. Another factor important to contemporary narrative was the rise of modern psychology—Freud and Jung, and now Lacan—which destroyed the commonly held ideas of human nature that gave the novel realistic characterization. As we shall see below in the case of Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima,* Jungian psychology has bequeathed to modern narrative archetypal characterization and plot. We should admit and try to constate in our readings, that although the novel is not dead, writers have always had at their disposal pre-novelistic narrative strategies.

Let me now sketch out a tentative proposal for the genres of Chicano narrative. With some modifications, I am following Frye's classifications outlined in the *Anatomy of Criticism* in the section "Rhetorical Criticism: Theory of Genres." Three major divisions can be detected from examples of recent narratives: the empirical, the mimetic, and the imaginative genres. To the empirical classification belongs the autobiography, to the mimetic, the novel, and to the imaginative, romance and satire. I will deal briefly with the autobiography and the novel. The autobiography is a self-defining empirical narrative. My conception of the novel will take form in relation to romance and satire.

The autobiography, like other empirical narratives—chronicle, history, biography—stresses the veracity of fact and concrete historical events. However, of special interest to the literary critic is the imaginative aspect of this form. This genre, which can be traced back to St. Augustine's *Confessions,* usually assumes the form of a personal spiritual crisis and an inward journey towards maturity. "Most autobiographies," writes Frye, "are inspired by a creative and therefore fictional impulse to select only those events and experiences in the writer's life that go to build an integrated pattern." [13] We can point to three Chicano autobiographies: Ernesto Galarza's *Barrio Boy* Anthony Quinn's *The Original Sin: A Self-Portrait,* and Richard Rodríguez' *The Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodríguez* (1982). Quinn's book still bears the stamp of St. Augustine in its Christian orientation of guilt and turning away from sin towards God. Galarza and Rodríguez seem to follow in the Anglo-American tradition of *The Education of Henry Adams.* The autobiography is partially didactic and it would be interesting to study this genre and understand why these writers, who all share the experience of recent immigration and who have achieved success in the United States, think themselves worthy or exemplary. All three books would yield ideological insights into the problematics of assimilation.

To the imaginative classification belong the romance and the satire. Relations of similarity and difference should emerge between romance and satire, and the mimetic form, the novel. Although I am emphasizing the imaginative genres, the majority of Chicano narratives, such as José Antonio Villarreal's *Pocho* (1959), Richard Vasquez' *Chicano* (1970), Tomás Rivera's *. . . y no se lo tragó la tierra* (1971), and Nash Candelaria's *Memories of the Alhambra* (1977), are novels.

Oscar Zeta Acosta's books *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* and

The Revolt of the Cockroach People should be read as satires.[14] The satirist can adopt the extreme position that society is a collection of irrational human beings and institutions. The satirist uses the free-play of his intellectual wit and fancy to persuade the reader that if anything can go wrong with society, it already has. If successful, the satirist will produce in the reader not only amusement, but also contempt, disgust, and bitterness. Irreverence defines the tone and attitude of the satirist towards his world. Satire has nothing to do with the transcendental or the ideal like the novel and romance. It is probably the most social of forms, part politics, part invective, part humor, and part art. It is in general an urban form, probably the first narrative genre about city life, practiced since Antiquity by unattractive, alienated figures, intellectuals, and pedants who feel they have the right to expose the truth at any cost.[15] Much of the misunderstanding of Acosta's misanthropic, egocentric, name-dropping image of the Chicano lawyer, the Brown Buffalo, is due to the misdirected readings of his books. I will limit my comments to his first book. Acosta's satiric vision in *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*, formed out of the sixties counterculture, focuses on the American ideological solution to the problem of ethnicity, the metaphor of the melting pot. Acosta's political strategy is to emphasize the ethnicity of all his many characters in both rural and urban settings, from Riverbank, California, to San Francisco. Acosta persuades the reader to accept that ethnicity is incompatible with "American" culture. Acosta registers at least seventeen ethnic types and nationalities—Mexicans, Native Americans, Blacks, as well as Europeans, Latin Americans, and Asians—that middle class, white, Angle-Saxon, Protestant society has relegated to subordinant or marginal status. This is pointed out for the reader in a most dramatic fashion in Acosta's own rural community, Riverbank, where the city is sectioned off, sharply divided, into the Mexican (Catholics, peach pickers), the Okie (Holy Rollers, cannery workers), and the American (Protestants, clerks) sectors.

While the novel may hold up a mirror to life, the satirist uses the mirror to distort. Like the romance, satire may contain fantastic or marvelous devices, but only to produce outlandish or grotesque transformations in settings, scenes, and characters. In Acosta's book, the modern equivalent of the marvelous, the halucinogens of the sixties drug culture—grass, peyote, cocaine, and acid—are used not to produce any cosmic vision, but to distort and create caricature. That distortion will play a central role in the book, is foregrounded for the reader in the opening scene. Acosta invents his literary persona through satire directed inwards when he stands naked before the mirror. Satire deflates in rank and status, and shows up for us that despite spiritual aspirations we are animals. Acosta observes his "two large chunks of brown tit," his "brown belly," and his "little bugger," though he assumes a macho image and identifies with tough guys like Charles Atlas, James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, and Humphrey Bogart. This scene must in turn be interpreted in relation to his unheroic efforts with women, his ineffectiveness as a Legal Aid lawyer, and his

suicidal tendencies (on July 4, 1967, Acosta falls asleep at Ernest Hemingway's grave). The dehumanizing aspect of this genre is evident in the emphasis on bodily functions in the first scene, belching, farting, defecating, and masturbating. Acosta hurls a critical comment at himself when he observes his face, his identity, in the toilet water, where his ass should be.

Some of the most misunderstood elements of Acosta's fiction are his plotting and character development. Unlike the plot of the novel which is united by beginnings, middles, and endings through the laws of rational probability, the plot of Acosta's fictional autobiography is loose, episodic, and disproportionate.[16] No attempt is made to link character to character, nor mainplot to subplot. What binds the multiple episodes in satire is simply the life of the central character. For the sake of truth of the eye witness, the events in satire are presented in an autobiographical form by the narrator who can digress from the main action at any time. Acosta expresses both the spirit and the form of satire when he writes: "I speak as a historian, a recorder of events with a sour stomach. I have no love for memories of the past."[17] Important earmarks of this form are the variety of incident and the transformation of character proceeding from incident to incident. The transformation can be as social as *Lazarillo de Tormes* or as fantastic as Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, or incredible as Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, the story of a man who became an ass in order to find out what it's like to be human. Transformation of character as well as digressions, breaks in the narrative, and variety of incident are essential to Acosta's plot. The plot of the journey from San Francisco, through Nevada, Idaho, Colorado, Texas to Juárez, Mexico, is juxtaposed against memories of childhood and adolescence. Depending upon scene and episode, Acosta is an athlete, musician, writer, religious man, lawyer, or laborer. He is a high school football player in Riverbank; a clarinet player in the Air Force Band; a Southern Baptist missionary who finds salvation in the jungles of Panama converting natives to Christianity; an author of a novel, *My Cart for My Casket*; a physical therapist in a mental hospital for the rich in St. Louis; a lawyer in San Francisco; Henry Hawk, a Samoan, in Nevada; a Blackfoot Indian Chief, Brown Buffalo, in Idaho, who had also been a driver for Ernest Hemingway in Cuba; a dishwasher, plumber, and construction worker in Colorado; and finally a pimp in Juárez. And depending upon Acosta's whim, the improbable or unexpected events are either blown up to the level of a scene or relegated to summary narration in a sentence. Acosta's plot is the search for a Chicano identity; however, in reference to the social character of satire, the plot of the Brown Buffalo should also be construed as an occasion to reject the limitations of novelistic discourse, and capture a broad sequential or metonymic representation of social and cultural life in the United States.

The word satire comes from the Latin *satura* which means full, sated, copious, or a dish of various ingredients, a medly.[18] In fact, a stock scene of this genre is the *cena*. The effect of this scene in satire is to reduce an event of companionship and good taste to the level of absurdity through quarrels, vulgarities, and obscenities. Acosta reinvents the dinner scene on the

occasion of his dropping out from straight society. Though the scene recalls the solemnity of the last supper—in his thirty-third year, on July 1, 1967, Acosta will figuratively die and leave San Francisco—the dinner turns into a repugnant affair. Madonna and child roles are reversed, as Acosta's Armenian nurse girl friend holds his head and sucks out mucous from his nose after too much cocaine. In conclusion, satire is the genre of excesses, where anything goes, including decorum. Thus the writer can indulge in slang, coloquialisms, and obscenities.

The romance is the literary form closest to myth and religion. Frye describes it as myth displaced towards the aesthetic.[19] The romance can reduce history to an atemporal present; it is a wish-fulfillment phantasy to free the self from the anxieties of existence, especially death and sterility; it is in terms of a plot, the search in the past and in the future for some imaginative Golden Age. This is the case with the symbolic relationship between the two central protagonists in Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima,* the *curandera* Ultima and the seven-year-old Antonio Márez. As her name implies—*ánima*—she is a spiritual entity and emblematic of the passing of an age—*última,* the last—when man lived in harmony with nature. Anaya speaks to this symbolic characterization through the concept of the "epiphany in landscape." He writes:

> In speaking about landscape, I would prefer to use the Spanish word *la tierra,* simply because it conveys a deeper relationship between man and his place, and it is this kinship to the environment which creates the metaphor and the epiphany in landscape. On one pole of the metaphor stands man, on the other is the raw, majestic and awe-inspiring landscape of the southwest; the epiphany is the natural response to that landscape, a coming together of these two forces. And because I feel a close kinship with my environment I feel constantly in touch with that epiphany which opens me up to receive the power in my landscape.[20]

In his writing about the poetic symbolism of romance, Frye too addresses the notion of epiphany. He writes: "One important detail in poetic symbolism remains to be considered. This is the symbolic presentation of the point at which the undisplaced apocalyptic world and the cyclical world of nature come into alignment, and which we propose to call the point of epiphany."[21] The term epiphany, whether it is used by Frye or Anaya, signifies a human recognition or scene of illumination where the cyclical forces of nature are aligned with a metaphysical or spiritual world. Ultima can, thus, be interpreted as Anaya's romantic vision of a *genius loci.* An ideal scene of recognition, dramatically different from Acosta's initial scene, unfolds for the reader in the opening paragraph as the young Antonio is awakened to consciousness through the vision of nature presented by Ultima. Antonio narrates:

> Ultima came to stay with us the summer I was almost seven. When she came the beauty of the llano unfolded before my eyes, and the gurgling waters of the river sang to the hum of the turning earth. The magical time of

> childhood stood still, and the pulse of the living earth pressed its mysteries into my living blood. She took my hand, and the silent, magic powers she possessed made beauty from the raw, sun-baked llano, the green river valley, and the blue bowl which was the white sun's home. My bare feet felt the throbbing earth and my body trembled with excitement. Time stood still, and it shared with me all that had been, and all that was to come. . . .[22]

It will serve us well to realize to what extent Anaya's vision of nature is determined by the ideological conception of landscape. Although he invokes Mexican culture's ties to raw nature, *la tierra*, the idea of "epiphany in landscape" is an aesthetic rendering of natural forces. As Raymond Williams points out, in the Western tradition the idea of landscape in literature, painting, architecture, and gardening implies that nature has been imaginatively reordered, reorganized, redistributed not for production, but for consumption.[23] It is a fact of literary history that nature undergoes a transformation in Romanticism; mere geography is lifted to an aesthetic that inspires awe and feeling in the observer, to a "sense of place" where the individual might find solace and comfort.

Anaya's confidence in nature is due to the historical context out of which his book emerges, the "back to nature" cultural movements of the sixties. Antonio is forced to choose between the plain and the valley of his ancestors. These two places portray both a spiritual sense of place and two pre-capitalist ways of life and work free from alienation and in harmony with the natural world: the *vaquero* way of life of the Márez family and the farming life of the Lunas. However, this romance still includes historical events, and history accounts not only for the confidence in nature, but also for a sense of loss. The vision of some utopian Hispanic past must be interpreted against those events historically significant because Anaya has chosen to recall them, and which have drastic consequences for the unity of life. These events are World War II which disrupts the unity of the Márez family, turning children against parents and older ways of life, and the advent of the nuclear age which presents the possibility of the destruction of both man and nature.

The romance, which deals with attractive, stylized figures, is midway between the novel with mediated characters and myth which deals with supernatural agents and gods. Unlike the novel where the conditions of human action are prescribed by verisimilitude, logical probability, and observable phenomena, the hero of romance, or in our case, the heroine Ultima, moves in a world where the ordinary laws of nature have been suspended. As in pre-literate fairy tales, Antonio's psychological distance between thought and deed can be rendered unproblematical by Ultima's assistance. Like other romances, Anaya's book presents a world of antagonistic spiritual forces of good and evil where events are the products of magic and curses, as in the struggle between the good Ultima and the evil Tenorio Trementina. Thus in the romance, good and evil are coded not in existential terms, as in the novel, but in abstract or absolute categories. Ultima is central to the plot as a mediator between the world of men—

society, culture, and history—and the cyclical world of nature. She is a reinterpretation of myth, the archetypal or symbolic representation of matriarchal lunar cults, the pre-Oedipal fertility and agricultural deities of world mythology. And like the Greek Diana/Hecate relationship she is both goddess and sorceress. In terms of Antonio's religious quest, Ultima can be for him the answer to the solar, masculine, anthropomorphic Christian god of Western culture.

Like other romances, the plot of Anaya's book depends upon patterns of recurrence: plots of sacrifice, death, and resurrection; the Liturgical Calendar; the natural cycle of the seasons. The writer of romance, unlike the novelist who structures his plot according to linear time, needs the security of knowing that time is cyclical, that sterility and death will be followed by physical and spiritual renewal. Other books whose rhetoric is structured according to romance are, for example, Ron Arias' *The Road to Tamazunchale* and Orlando Romero's *Nambé—Year One*.

What I am trying to argue for with these classifications—autobiography, novel, romance, and satire—is that genres establish a ground of relationships of similarities and differences. Each narrative genre is coded with recognizable family traits that are constitutive of the form. To identify the particular kind of attitude, tone, and voice of the narrator, the formation of character, the distinctive plot structure, the representation of scenes and settings, is also to understand how genres take on meaning in relation to each other. Genre study should be a matter of classification, but more importantly clarification.

Returning to this speech act model of literary discourse, genres are also a particular class of utterance bound by its own rules and narrative strategies which function as verbal procedures; they, thus, also have heuristic value for the reader. These generic instructions should guide the reader's wandering viewpoint into appropriate responses that will ensure successful communication. A far greater heuristic value will accrue to the reader if he or she immediately recognizes generic strategies. To describe or judge a genre by the norms of another is to misunderstand. Though I am distinctly focusing on the notion of genre in the speech act model, we should understand that any reading of a literary text is guided by the notion of genre; genres are an indispensable part of reading. As the novel-centered view of narrative demonstrates, reading without a shared conception of genre and its conventions is impossible. I have yet to read in the literature on Chicano narrative a piece that does not mention the word novel. What this points out is that genres are also social institutions that specify or describe how literature as a cultural product is to be received. The use or consumption of a book is influenced by the cultural and ideological expectations of both critics and reading public. It can become increasingly difficult, as the shared conception of the novel illustrates, to sort out or to exclude from the performative situation inappropriate responses and to guarantee that a narrative will be read according to its own rhetorical strategies.

The reasons for the inappropriate responses to Chicano narratives is, of

course, historical. How is it that a term in English invented by eighteenth-century British readers to mean a realistic prose narrative as opposed to the more imaginative romance, has bcome so central to literature today that it is now the generic description for any long prose narrative. Some of the misunderstanding is due to our notion that the novel is a mature form that has outgrown romance and satire. Thus, the novel can be a useful indicator of the maturity of a culture. I think, following Jameson, that another root cause is the increased commercialization of literature, the commodification of name-brand labeling that specifies the appropriate social exchange and consumption of a product.[24] The sloganizing trend in various languages—*la nueva novela, le nouveau roman*, the new novel—that goes with the literature of the sixties and seventies in another example of this phenomenon. The most dramatic example in Chicano literature is Villaseñor's *Macho!* which appeared in 1973 shortly after the sixties and was hailed by Bantam Books on the cover as "the first great Chicano novel."

Let me conclude by emphasizing that my reading of these texts according to generic specifications is still partial interpretation. What remains to be done is to pursue the intelligibility of these narrative genres according to what can be described as the ideology of form.[25] When we examine the first Chicano narratives after the sixties, Richard Vasquez' *Chicano* in 1970, Tomás Rivera's . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra* and Ernesto Galarza's *Barrio Boy* in 1971, Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless me, Ultima* and Oscar Zeta Acosta's *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* in 1972, we find that ech writer has chosen a different genre, two novels, an autobiography, a romance, and a satire respectively. All share the common experience of growing up Chicano, all make references to historical events significant for all Chicanos, all come through the sixties, all are professionals, yet each has found a form suitable or adequate for his own specific content. Here, precisely in these first post-sixties narratives would be an excellent occasion to study contemporary Chicano narrative genres not just as formal problems, techniques and rhetorical strategies to be worked out, but also, as I have tried to point out with Anaya's and Acosta's texts, as places where symbolic political solutions will be sought for social and historical contradictions.

Héctor Calderón
Modern Language Association National Convention
Los Angeles, 1982

NOTES

1. Fredric Jameson, 'Commentary and Metacommentary," *PMLA* 86 (1971), 9–17. See also his lengthy, expanded version of this essay, "Towards Dialectical Criticism," in *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 306–416.

2. See Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957) and Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

3. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 1–7.

4. See Iser, *The Act of Reading*, pp. 86–87.

5. On the interaction between the reader and the literary text, see Iser's major divisions, "The Phenomenology of Reading: The Processing of the Literary Text" and "Interaction between Text and Reader: The Communicatory Structure of the Literary Text," in *The Act of Reading*.

6. *A Decade of Chicano Literature (1970–1979): Critical Essays and Bibliography* ed. Luis Leal, Fernando de Necochea, Francisco Lomelí, and Roberto G. Trujillo (Santa Bárbara, California: Editorial La Causa, 1982), p. 114.

7. *A Bibliography of Criticism of Contemporary Chicano Literature*, ed. Ernestina N. Eger (Berkeley, California: Chicano Studies library Publications, 1980), p. 47.

8. In his review article of *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* Osvaldo Romero writes: "A veces la narración se hace morosa, se va más de la mitad de la novela en describir cinco días (en los cuales enmarca la mayoría de sus recuerdos infantiles), y en menos de tres párrafos describe los eventos de varios meses." See *Mester* 4, 2 (1974), p. 141. In a similar vein, Arthur Ramírez writes: "Acosta has his faults. At times he might be trivial and trite, banal and boring (rarely), . . . undisciplined, unrestrained and digresive, self-indlugent and unoriginal in both subject matter and style, his language lacking polish, his structure rather formless." See *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* 3, 3 (1975), p. 53.

9. See Ramón Saldívar, "A Dialectic of Difference: Towards a Theory of the Chicano Novel," *MELUS* 6, 3 (1979), p. 85.

10. See Eliud Martínez, "Ron Arias' *The Road to Tamazunchale*: A Chicano Novel of the New Reality, " *Latin American Literary Review* 5, 10 (1977), 51–63.

11. See Vernon E. Lattin's "The 'Horror of Darkness': Meaning and Structure in Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*," *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* 6, 2 (1978), 50–57, and Nasario García's "The Concept of Time in *Nambé—Year One*," *Latin American Literary Review* 7, 13 (1978), 20–28.

12. Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 350.

13. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 307.

14. Frye's brief remarks on satire, *Anatomy of Criticism*, pp. 309–312, remain the most concise, clear, and influential formulations on this genre. Other critics have followed Frye's example—Robert C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962)' Alvin B. Kernan, *The Plot of Satire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965); Matthew Hodgart, *Satire* (London: World University Library, 1969); and Alfred J. MacAdam, *Modern Latin American Narratives: The Dreams of Reason (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977)*—writing on literate and pre-literate cultures, on European and non-European traditions, on ancient as well as modern satirists. I am indebted to all of these writers for the formal characteristics of satire.

15. The satirist's emphasis on the evil and corruption of city life can be traced back to Juvenal's negative image of Rome. See Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire*, pp. 3–5, and Hodgart, *Satire*, p. 129. In his *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 46–48, Raymond Williams chooses Juvenal's satires to shed light on the traditional rhetorical constrast, the ideological comparison between rural innocence and corrupt urban life. These comparisons, as we shall se below, are telling for both satiric and romantic visions in literature.

16. Alvin B. Kernan offers the most concise and clear discussion of the distinguishing characteristics between the linear plot of the novel and the loosely-jointed plot of satire in the chapter "The Nature of Plot," pp. 95–104, in his *The Plot of Satire*. If we are to locate the ideological pre-conditions for the plot of the novel in *Don Quixote*, then we should understand their Aristotelian origins. Even in the first part of his novel through all the interpolated tales, Cervantes aspires to verisimilitude and unity in plot development by connecting beginnings, middles, and endings, by uniting characters with other characters, by narrating events

of sufficient length to admit a change in fortune brought about by what is necessary or probable.

17. Oscar Zeta Acosta. *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* (San Francisco, California: Straight Arrow Books, 1972), p. 18.

18. Elliott disentangles the origins of the English *satire* from (1) the Latin *satura* meaning a specific Latin literary form, itself derived from "sated" or "full" and "mixture" or "medly," and (2) the Greek *satyr*, a poem or play with a strong critical attitude directed against human vice. See *The Power of Satire*, pp. 100–105.

19. For Frye's specific pronouncements on the romance form that I have used in my definition, see *Anatomy of Criticism*, pp. 33, 104–107, 186, 203, 304–306.

20. Rudolfo A. Anaya, "The Writer's Landscape: Epiphany in Landscape," *Latin American Literary Review* 5, 10 (1977), pp. 98–99.

21. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 203.

22. Rudolfo A. Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima* (Berkeley, California: Quinto Sol Publications, Inc., 1972), p. 1.

23. See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, pp. 120–141.

24. See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 106-107.

25. Fredric Jameson conceives of the interpretation of literary forms not just as an enumeration of stylistic or generic features, but more significantly as a symbolic enactment of the social within an aesthetic realm. Lévi-Strauss' classic account of Caduveo facial art represents for Jameson the symbolic "working out" on a formal or aesthetic level of real social contradictions. See *The Political Unconscious*, pp. 77–79. However, the best elaboration of these ideas is his chapter on romance in the same book, "Magical Narratives: On the Dialectical Use of Genre Criticism," pp. 103–150.

EL CUARTO HONRAR A PADRE Y MADRE

Niños tristes, solitarios,
recostados en los muros
sosteniendo con sus huesos
la flaqueza de sus mundos.

Sendas lánguidas y amargas
han dejado los adultos
junto a un sueño: que sus hijos
logren resolver el caos,
puedan convertir en flores
los harapos de las guerras
y los surcos de las bombas . . .

Egoísmo, odios y muerte,
simulacros de heroísmo,
contaminación y drogas:
¡He aquí la herencia niños!

Adolescentes cansados
criando a pobres inocentes.
Arrogantes, se creen padres.
¡Ignorantes. No han crecido!

Niños tristes, preocupados
en mirar a un cielo limpio
y en vivir solo el presente
en estóico concierto.

Niños lentos, recostados
en los muros de los parques,
desperdiciando energía
cualquier sábado en la tarde,
reprochando su pasado y
sosteniendo con sus huesos
la flaqueza de sus padres.

Alberto Cabra
Queens College,
Nueva York

Novel into Essay: Fuentes' *Terra nostra* as Generator of *Cervantes o la crítica*

Fuentes' *Terra nostra* (1975) is a vast, generating text, one that creates multiple "mirror texts" both within and outside of itself. One of the titles originally considered by Fuentes for this work was "Renacimiento," and indeed, birth and rebirth on the levels of human reproduction, cosmic origin, and artistic genesis constitute a major theme of this narrative *summa* of the Mexican author. The strange, prodigious communal birthing present at the very beginning, the birth at the end of a new androgynous being and of a New World as Polo Febo and Celestina unite in order to re-populate the universe; the obsessive but continually frustrated attempts of Isabel, wife of King Felipe, to create an heir, even resorting to a pact with the devil; the birth of new worlds, as Fuentes evokes the cosmogony of the indigenous peoples of America, the birth of new ages, as the novel takes place at the end of the year 1999, to herald the second millenium—all of these births are paralleled by another important genesis evoked by Fuentes—the exact moment of the creation of a new era in the novel, the moment of Cervantes' inspired creation of *Don Quixote*. Like *Terra nostra*, the work that in large measure influenced it, Fuentes' essay *Cervantes o la crítica de la lectura* (1976) exemplifies the awesome totality of *Terra nostra* extended even further—to encompass both the creative and the critical spheres.

Cervantes o la crítica, like its "parent text," is an *obra abierta*. Open in that its time span is from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, open in that within the space of only one hundred pages it ranges over history, philosophy, physical science, theology, painting, film, literature, economics and linguistics; open in that it analyzes Cervantes not only within the context of his own epoch, that of Spain of the Counter-Reformation, but also as the double of James Joyce and even as the Founding Father of the Latin American Boom. In order to demonstrate the importance of this imaginative and provacative essay, our investigation will concentrate on three of its salient characteristics. First we will analyze the work as an explanatory text, as a crucial guide to the mammoth and intricate *Terra nostra* and also as an eloquent defense of this "total novel" against the critics who have been overwhelmed by it and who, many times, have reacted only to the surface structure and to the most prominent of the characters and settings, such as the authoritarian Felipe and the lugubrious Escorial. Fuentes' essay, in which key figures and basic theme of *Terra nostra* are presented in a highly condensed form, underscores *Terra nostra* not as several critics have viewed it, as a work written by a despotic authorial presence, or as a grandiose *opus* in which Fuentes deliberately sets out to monumentalize himself, but rather as a narrative of freedom—as an exuberant affirmation of the all-expansive power of the imagination, one that monumentalizes not the author but

literature itself, in an age in which the size, scope, and stature of the novel have all vastly diminished, and in which the novel as a result has in many instances been reduced to a partial, rarefied, or even a trivialized artistic form.

If, as some critics have maintained, *Terra nostra* is one of Fuentes' least read novels, it is nonetheless one of his most controversial. The declarative statements, the linear, expository language that predominate in the essay bring into bold relief the incidents and characters that in the novel are engulfed in a whirlwind of narrators, times, and places, all of which incessantly shift, blend, and then separate again, and all conveyed to the reader by a convoluted, baroque prose style. The labyrinthine world of the novel is permeated by fantasies—dreams, hallucinations, nightmares, supernatural occurrences, paintings that not only speak but that constantly change their content and that finally dissolve and flow out of their frames. The complex welter of ideas, images, and worlds that is *Terra nostra* is reduced to a manageable form in *Cervantes o la crítica*, a work that in many ways is inseparable from the novel. As a text by an author that focusses on one of his creative works, offering the aesthetics behind that creation, Fuentes' *Cervantes o la crítica* parallels the process of self-reflexiveness that is exemplified in the works of other leading authors of the Boom. Julio Cortázar, for example, elaborates on the aesthetic principles behind the creation of *Rayuela*, in the bits of narrative, relegated to the "Capítulos prescindibles" that are really just the opposite, in that they are essential to our understanding of *Rayuela*, called the Morelliana. Named after the experimental writer Morelli, a persona of Cortázar himself and a character in *Rayuela*, the Morelliana, like *Cervantes o la crítica*, have also appeared as a separate text, published under the title *La casilla de los Morelli*.

Second, we will discuss *Cervantes o la crítica* as epitomizing one of the dominant characteristics of Fuentes' art—the quest for unity: unity between indigenous and *criollo* Mexico, unity between Mexico and *la madre patria*, Spain; unity between Hispanic and English literary traditions; and, finally, in an age in which the basic humanistic disciplines remain fragmented and often severely isolated from one another, resulting in the increasingly marginal role of the humanities in modern, technologically oriented society—unifying these disciplines, all of which are essential for a complete understanding of both *Terra nostra* and for that of the seventeenth century *novela totalizante, Don Quixote*. Perhaps as the result of his family background as the son of a diplomat, perhaps as an extension of his own professional endeavors in diplomacy, when he served as ambassador to France, Fuentes constantly strives to reconcile diverse figures, forces, ideologies and cultures that many Latin American intellectuals have perceived in terms of polar opposites: Cortés and Moctezuma, Quetzalcóatl and Tezcatlipoca, Mexico and Spain.

Finally, we will view *Cervantes o la crítica de la lectura* as an imaginative exercise, one whose original style—its repeated use of antithesis, its exuberant pyramiding of images, its poetic re-creation and constant doubling of Cervantes, who is evoked as the double of Columbus, the soul-mate or

perhaps even the soul-sharer of William Shakespeare, and as the author of Borges, just as Borges in turn becomes the author of Pierre Menard who in his turn completes the circle by authoring the *Quixote*; and even the contemporary of James Joyce, demonstrates how this unique work of Fuentes is both critical and profoundly artistic. Just as in the essay, Fuentes in *Terra nostra* provides an elaborate re-creation of Cervantes, who appears as both *cronista*, the court historian of Felipe, and also as idealistic, Utopian visionary. Cervantes is re-created as both character within *Terra nostra* and as the author of this text. The Cervantes created by Fuentes is a bridge figure, one who although forced to fight against the Turks at Lepanto nevertheless identifies strongly with their culture and seeks to preserve it. Fuentes' Cervantes is an expanding character in both the essay and the novel; in *Terra nostra el manco de Lepanto* can be identified with another *manco*, this one found in the New World—Polo Febo, another character who throughout the narrative acquires many identities—New World Pilgrim, Quetzalcóatl, modern version of Cuauhtémoc, and finally, the Adam to Celestina's Eve. At the outset of *Terra nostra* Polo Febo appears as but a marginal figure, occupying the lowly social position of sandwich-board man, yet he will turn out to be the New World idealistic center of the work—the equivalent to Cervantes in the Old World. A seeming outcast in society at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Polo Febo's marginality reflects that of the historical Cervantes in seventeenth century Spain. It is significant that both characters are evoked in terms of the founder figure—Polo Febo/Quetzalcóatl as the founder of a new civilization, both after the holocaust of the Conquest of Mexico and, in the twenty-first century, after the apocalypse with which *Terra nostra* concludes; Cervantes as the founder of the new era in the novel. Perhaps the most profound doubling of Cervantes in *Terra nostra*, one which is clarified in the essay through Fuentes' focus on the intense idealism of *Don Quixote*, is his indirect fusion with the spirit of the benevolent god Quetzalcóatl. Unlike *La región más transparente* (1958), a far more pessimistic novel than *Terra nostra*, ruled by the presences of the dread deities Coatlicue and Huitzilopochtli and suffused with the insatiable demand for blood sacrifice, the guiding spiritual presence of *Terra nostra* is Quetzalcóatl, the ancient Toltec god of the sun and god of life and love, and significantly, the god of the artists and the artesans, the god of the same creative spirit so profoundly manifested by Cervantes.

Throughout Fuentes' work, the past, evoked as a powerful, often inescapable force, whether this be the ancient indigenous past as in *La región más transparente*, the epoch of the Conquest, as in *Todos los gatos son pardos*, the colonial past, as in *Una familia lejana*, or, as in *Terra nostra*, the Rome of Tiberius and the Spain of the Hapsburg dynasty, is not presented for its own sake but in order to illuminate contemporary Mexico or contemporary Latin America—and, as occurs in *Terra nostra*, to presage the Latin America of the distant future. So too is Fuentes' extensive analysis of *Don Quixote* in *Cervantes o la crítica* designed to demonstrate the contem-

poraneity of this Golden Age text. Evoked as a novel that is conscious of itself as a novel, that requires a plurality of readings, that is an open, heterogeneous creation, that portrays multiple levels of reality, that ruptures the "orden épico que reprimía las posibilidades de la ficción narrativa," Fuentes' version of *Don Quixote* emerges as a *nueva novela*, leading us to the final doubling of Cervantes into the figure of Fuentes himself. Through his literary eclecticism, his skillful integration of Italian epics like Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Cervantes universalized the Spanish novel. And, just as Cervantes' work is uniquely Spanish and yet international, so also is Fuentes' work, so preoccupied with the nature and meaning of his country, both uniquely Mexican and yet extraordinarily cosmopolitan. Perhaps more so than any other Latin American novelist, Fuentes' art of the novel parallels what Octavio Paz has achieved for Latin American poetry—the attainment of universality. Like Cervantes with the Spanish novel, Fuentes, one of the "prime movers" of the Boom, has forever altered the course of Latin American fiction.

The publication of *Cervantes o la crítica* has disconcerted some of the critics, who view this exegesis by the author of his own work as usurping the role of the impartial critic, or at the very least as an attempt to dominate the critic in his approach to the novel. Yet this dramatic metamorphosis of Fuentes into a major critic of his own work, echoing the all-encompassing role that Agustín, the dramatist in Unamuno's play *Soledad*, establishes for himself as "autor, actor, y público," is but the logical extension of the all-encompassing effort present in the conceptualization of *Terra nostra*. Some of the critics have maintained that Fuentes desires to diminish or even totally to control the reaction of the reader, reducing him to a puppet manipulated by an all-powerful but hidden authorial presence. Yet we may also interpret Fuentes' motives as seeking both to give away his sources, commenting extensively on those sources in order to indicate to the reader possible ways of approaching his work, challenging that critic to arrive at his own conclusions, and stressing, as we have seen, the basically protean, open, freedom-seeking and problematic shape of the novel—thus creating a space into which the critic can enter. Rather than being rendered superfluous, the critic in fact is privileged by this second work, for he or she can now draw immediately upon a wealth of source material to aid him in coming to grips with the complexities of *Terra nostra*. Fuentes has significantly altered the role of the scholar-critic. Instead of laboriously having to track down the sources that the author has done his best to conceal, or as in the case of Miguel Angel Asturias when queried about the influence of James Joyce on *El señor presidente* even to deny, the investigator of *Terra nostra* is the recipient of Fuentes' proud display of his sources—which range from Pre-Columbian literature to Umberto Eco, from Erasmus to Américo Castro, from *Las siete partidas* of Alfonso X to Keyne's *A Treatise on Money*, and from Bernal Díaz to Ortega y Gasset. Far from suffering from any "anxiety of influence," Fuentes' self-assurance in listing his sources for *Terra nostra* at the end of *Cervantes o la crítica* reflects the fact that with

la nueva narrativa Latin American authors have finally established their own *terra nostra*, their own new Golden Age of literary achievement, which Fuentes underscores through his direct link of Cervantes and the New World literature of the twentieth century. The artistic achievement of the Boom becomes, literally in the case of *Terra nostra*, symbolically in the case of other writings of Fuentes and in that of the prodigious achievements of García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Alejo Carpentier, Cabrera Infante, José Donoso, Julio Cortázar, Jorge Luis Borges, Juan Rulfo, and many others, the flowering of Spain in the New World—a genuine and sustained rebirth of the Spanish Golden Age. Therefore, rather than being embarrassed to reveal their sources for fear of again, as has occurred so many times in the past, being branded as practitioners of *literatura refrita*, they can now openly acknowledge—as have done so Vargas Llosa and Julio Cortázar in addition to Fuentes—the myriad, world-wide influences on their art.

In a major sense, Fuentes' essay is a complementary text to the dark, asphyxiated world of sixteenth and seventeenth century imperial Spain that is both chronicled and devastatingly caricatured by Fuentes in *Terra nostra*, and that has led some critics to claim that Fuentes seeks to perpetuate the *leyenda negra* of Inquisitorial and absolutist Spain. In *Terra nostra* as in *Cervantes o la crítica*, Fuentes does not fall into the simplistic, Manichean attitude of either glorifying or debunking Spain but instead presents Golden Age Spain in all of its complexity and paradox—epitomized by the extraordinarily complex figure of Felipe II, who is not only a synthesis of the Hapsburg rulers of Spain, from Carlos I to Felipe II to Carlos II, el Hechizado,[1] but also a personification of the inward-turning, self-divided, tormented soul of Spain down through the centuries. In his essay as well as in *Todos los gatos son pardos* and *Terra nostra*, Fuentes constantly breaks down the facile dichotomies so often adhered to by both historians and writers of fiction in their portrayal of the Conquest—accounts of the oppressors and the oppressed, the civilizers and the barbarians, the dichotomy of either the enlightened *conquistadores*, boldly and triumphantly bringing civilization to the perverted, ignorant savages, or of the cruel, rapacious, and degenerate *conquistadores* decimating and enslaving the innocent, helpless New World peoples. Fuentes instead sees the nobility—and the savagery—present on both the Spanish and the Aztec sides of the Conquest. The Conquest of Mexico, for Fuentes the most important event in the history of his country because it altered the face of the nation irrevocably, is evoked in the language of incessant paradox—death of one civilization, Aztec Mexico—and birth of another: the *mestizo* Mexican nation. And Fuentes emphasizes the great contributions to preserve the indigenous civilization made by Sahagún, Motolonía, and Las Casas:

> Qué terrible conocimiento el del instante mismo de nuestra gestación, con todas sus ternuras y crueldades contradictorias; qué intensa conciencia . . . qué magnífico dolor: nacer sabiendo cuánto debió morir para darnos el ser; el esplendor de las antiguas civilizaciones indígenas. España, padre cruel: Cortés. España, padre generoso: Las Casas.[2]

It is true that the novel presents a far darker portrait of Hapsburg Spain than does the essay. In *Terra nostra,* the emphasis is on the degeneration of the Hapsburg line—the sadism, necrophilia, and madness that are so powerfully portrayed. Yet, in *Terra nostra* and, more explicitly, in the essay, are also depicted the glorious cultural achievements of Golden Age Spain. In both novel and essay there is a marked contrast between the closed, stifling space of annihilation—the physical space of Felipe's negative creation, the Escorial, that symbolizes the obsessed and morbid space of his constricted mind—and the space of freedom, the space that is political, represented by the rebellion of the *comuneros* in 1521; amatory, symbolized by the escapades of Don Juan, portrayed as a rebel who constantly undermines the ascetism and suppression of the passions enforced by Felipe, and, in a major sense, artistic. Through his discussions in the essay of *La Celestina, El burlador de Sevilla,* and *Don Quixote,* and through his evocation of Cervantes as an iconoclastic writer, one who in his art undermines the rigid patterns of the Spain of the Counter-Reformation, Fuentes makes clear what in the novel often is more problematic—the primacy of the artist both in the New World and the Old, and art as a force of freedom that ultimately prevails over political and military authoritarianism both in Spain and in Latin America, in the New World republics that Fuentes sees as marred by the dictatorship and oppression inherited from the absolutist Spain of the sixteenth century. In both essay and novel, Fuentes eloquently affirms the purpose of art as complementary to the tragedy of history, as an affirmation of the utopian, democratic, and sensual history that Spain and the New World should have had but were denied. In *Terra nostra,* this alternative, idealized history is stunningly dramatized through the "theater of memory" of Valerio Camillo and in the options to create a Utopian society given by Mihail-ben-Sama to Felipe. As Fuentes declares in the essay:

> Porque la historia de España (y podríamos añadir: la historia de América Española) ha sido lo que la historia ha negado a España. El arte da vida a lo que la historia ha asesinado. El arte da voz a lo que la historia ha negado, silenciado. (82)

It is significant that just as the artist—Cervantes, Signorelli, Fernando de Rojas, Tirso de Molina, James Joyce—is the major force in the essay, so too is the artist the major power—the one that triumphs over the despotism and the death force of Felipe—in *Terra nostra.* The one person eloquently to defy El Señor—and to do so with impunity is the court painter Fray Julián, like so many of the characters of *Terra nostra* a composite, multiple identity, a fusion of Signorelli and Diego Velázquez. The protean Julián is sent along by Felipe with the *conquistador* Guzmán to temper the excesses of the latter in the New World. Fray Julián thus acquires still another positive identity, as he merges with the historical figure of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, and represents as well the other Franciscans and Dominicans who struggled to aid the defeated Indian peoples, devastated economically and spiritually by the Conquest, to preserve their language and culture. In a

dramatic encounter with the paranoid and power-mad monarch that takes place on a magical level, Julián proudly summons all of the colors and textures of his mysterious "living" painting back to him, thereby asserting the autonomy of his art. And he defiantly declares the purpose of art not to be the exclusive possession of royalty, but as a democratic phenomenon. This viewpoint is reiterated by Fuentes at the end of *Cervantes o la crítica*, as he maintains that literary art is "communal property," "la escritura es de todos":

> Los múltiples y mínimos detalles del fondo, todas las escenas del Nuevo Testamento, dejaban de ser forma discernible y concreta, se volvían otra cosa, pura luz, o puro líquido, y como un arco de luz, o un río de colores, mezclados y fluyentes, corrían por encima de la cabeza del Señor, se iban, se iban . . .
>
> "Castigadme, Señor, si crees que me robo lo tuyo; perdonadme si sólo recojo lo mío para entregarlo a los demás; ni mío, ni tuyo, el cuadro será de todos"[3]

His painting will be reconstituted, but not in Spain, rather in a new World idealistically evoked by Julián, who here is merged with the Utopian visionaries like Vasco de Quiroga and Las Casas:

> —En el nuevo mundo, en la tierra virgen donde el conocimiento puede renacer, despojarse de la fijeza del ícono y desplegarse infinitamente, en todas las direcciones, sobre todos los espacios, hacia todos los tiempos.
> (TN, 617)

Like Cervantes, Signorelli is thus re-created as a bridge figure between Old and New Worlds. The painting becomes a symbol of freedom on many levels, as it dramatizes on its everchanging canvas the many medieval heresies that Fuentes expatiates on in the essay and that he regards as products of the "novelists of the medieval ages," heretics who defied the one, official dogma to explore alternative beliefs.

Julián-Signorelli's act of rebellion against Felipe symbolizes the spirit of artistic liberty that will be transplanted to the New World and that will flourish in the works of New world artists, who in their *literatura comprometida*, a literature silenced over and over again in *la madre patria*, will carry on the tradition of intellectual inquiry and dissent that flourished in medieval Spain. New World art is thus presented by Fuentes as the continuation of the open, multiple, iconoclastic space exemplified by the medieval heretics, the visual art of Signorelli, and the writings of Cervantes.

In *Cervantes o la crítica*, Fuentes emphasizes *Don Quijote* as a self-reflexive text, as a text in which the characters are both voracious readers and beings who know that they are read. This same self-consciousness is highly important in *Terra nostra*, in which the central figure, Felipe, reads incessantly and reads about himself, just as Don Quijote does. So obsessed is Felipe by the word that he goes to the extreme of believing that all of reality is present in the written word:

> Unicamente lo escrito es real. Las palabras se las lleva, como las trajo, el viento. Sólo lo escrito permanece. Sólo creeré en mi vida si leo. Sólo creeré en mi muerte si la leo. (TN, 677)

Yet, ironically, Felipe, who initially is exalted as the controller of the word, will finally be dominated by the word. Although he is successful in quashing the revolt of the *comuneros*, through his henchman Guzmán, he is psychologically devastated by the rebellion of the word. The marvellous invention of the printing press, which makes words readily available to everyone, no longer the exclusive possession of his monks and scribes, becomes the instrument of that rebellion. And, in what is another celebration of the awesome political power of Cervantes, work, the book that defies Felipe is *Don Quixote*:

> —¿Los libros se reproducen?
> —Si, ya no son el ejemplar único, escrito sólo para ti y por tu encargo, iluminado por un monje, que tú puedes guardar en tu biblioteca y reservar para tu sola mirada.
> —Mil días y medio, dijiste, pero sólo has dado cuenta de cincuenta cuentos en veinte versiones: falta un medio día . . .
> —Que jamás se cumplirá, Felipe. Es la infinita suma de los lectores de este libro, que al terminar de leerlo uno, un minuto más tarde otro la inicia, y así sucesivamente, como la vieja demostración de la liebre y la tortuga: nadie gana la carrera, el libro nunca termina de leerse, el libro es de todos . . .
> —Entonces, mísero de mí, la realidad es de todos, pues sólo lo escrito es real. (TN, 610)

There is an ironic juxtaposition between the incessant fertility of the printing press and the sterility of Felipe, who cannot produce an heir—a sterility that in *Terra nostra* becomes symbolic of the exhausted, self-limiting nature of imperial Spain. Like *Cervantes o la crítica, Terra nostra* affirms on many levels the awesome power of the word, so that the Cervantes created by Fuentes would be able to state, in regard to Felipe, what Juan Montalvo declared in regard to another, modern dictator: the Ecuadorean García Moreno: "Mi pluma lo mató." Felipe despairs at having to begin a new battle, this one against an impossible foe. And the words, the hundreds of thousands of them that constitute *Terra nostra*, comprise another powerful text that stands against the tyranny which he incarnates:

> —El poder se funda en el texto. La legitimidad única es reflejo de la posesión del texto único. Mas ahora . . .
> ¿debo empezar nueva batalla, esta vez contra las letras que se reproducen por millares, y así otorga poderes y legitimidades a cuantos la poseyeran: nobles y villanos, obispos y herejes, mercaderes y alcahuetas, niños, rebeldes y enamorados? (TN, 611)

One of the salient characteristics of the essay, again reflecting *Terra nostra*, is the fervent quest for unity. Fuentes' art is a masterful art of synthesis. Indeed, Fuentes is to Mexican literature what the prodigious Diego

Rivera is to Mexican painting—a grand, exuberant synthesizer of history and myth, one who creates a panoramic simultaneity of all epochs of Mexican history, from the Pre-Columbian epoch to the era of Spanish colonization to the periods of Independence, Intervention, and Reform, to the Mexican Revolution and down to modern Mexico. Just as Cervantes in his novelistic craftsmanship is eclectic, both traditional and experimental, so too does Fuentes, both artistic descendant of Cervantes and father of a reborn Cervantes, masterfully fuse the traditional novel of plot, action, and character creation and development with the experimental narrative of multiple and fragmented times, spaces, and points of view, and with multiple languages. Cervantes is the great synthesizer of the *novela picaresca* and the *novela morisca*, the *novela de caballerías* and the *novela pastoril*, the *novela bizantina*, the *novela de aventuras*, and the *novela filosófica*. This eclecticism of Cervantes is forcefully perpetuated by Fuentes, who has stated that his own work is a fusion of—what else?—opposites—the novel of adventures, epitomized by the nineteenth century "thrillers" of Alexandre Dumas like *The Three Musketeers* and the *Count of Monte Cristo*, and the novel of language, epitomized by James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*.

Throughout the essay as throughout his great novel, Fuentes emphasizes both rupture and continuity. The apocalyptic orientation of *Terra nostra* exemplifies both the destruction of one world and the new beginnings, the new universe. In the essay, Cervantes, Joyce, Signorelli and, we might add, Fuentes himself—are all viewed as eclectic authors, dedicated to the principles of synthesis and accretion. Just as the ancient Aztecs, instead of demolishing their old pyramids at the end of the fifty-two year religious cycle, instead built new pyramids over the old, so too do Fuentes, Joyce, and Cervantes masterfully incorporate the historical, literary, and mythic pasts into their works. They thus not only enrich their art but, paradoxically, by incorporating the past they keep their art from ever being relegated to the past. Instead by fusing times their art achieves a timelessness:

> Cervantes desenmascara la épica medieval y le impone los sellos de la lectura crítica. Joyce desenmascara la épica total del Occidente, de Odiseo a la Reina Victoria . . . Sin embargo, tanto Cervantes como Joyce deben servirse de un orden previo de referencias a fin de apoyar en él la materia revolucionaria de sus obras. La novela de caballería en Cervantes. El mundo clásico de la epopeya homérica y el mundo de la escolástica medieval en Joyce. (98)

Similarly, Fuentes in *Terra nostra* constantly integrates past forms—the New World chronicle, the lyric lamentations of the indigenous peoples after the fall of Mexico as recorded by Sahagún, the baroque vision of seventeenth century Spain, to fortify an immense, experimental vision of what the novel can become—stretching the novel to its limits. Its ending is also both revolutionary and traditional. Male and female are fused literally, becoming a single being, one that is freed from the age-old, murderous duality of the sexes. Yet this fantastic creation that represents a new begin-

ning for humankind, is evoked in a style that is based on biblical language, the language of *Genesis*:

> parirás con dolor a los hijos, por ti será bendita la tierra, te dará espigas y frutos, con la sonrisa en el rostro comerás el pan, hasta que vuelvas a la tierra, pues de ella has sido tomado, ya que polvo eres, y al polvo volverás, sin pecado, con placer. (TN, 783)

Every new beginning in Fuentes contains the indelible mark of the past. The ritual of union that is performed at the end by Polo Febo/Quetzalcóatl and Celestina/Tlazolteotl is performed with masks, to indicate that the new beginning is also the continuation of the ancient past—as the fulfillment of the erotic and spiritual relationship between Quetzalcóatl/New World Pilgrim and Tlazolteotl that could not be consummated in the Aztec world, prostrate before the god of war, Huitzilopochtli.

In the essay as well as in *Terra nostra*, Fuentes must utilize the language of constant antitheses in order to evoke Cervantes' highly paradoxical art:

> ruptura del orden épico que reprimía las posibilidades de la ficción narrativa, la novela de Cervantes, como la pintura de Signorelli, debe apoyar su novedad en lo mismo que intenta negar y es tributaria de la forma anterior que se instala en el corazón de la novedad confusa como una exigencia de orden, de normatividad. (32)

Here we can see how Fuentes' interpretation of Cervantes is also a mirror of his own process of artistic creation. For example, Fuentes' masterpiece, *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962), is both the epitome of the traditional, of *la novela de la Revolución mexicana*, as it forcefully continues a major, highly innovative current in Mexican literature that began in 1915 with Mariano Azuela, was further developed by leading Mexican authors like Martín Luis Guzmán in the twenties, by Mauricio Magdaleno in the thirties, Agustín Yáñez in the forties, Juan Rulfo in the fifties, and that even today continues to flourish in works such as *José Trigo* (1966) by Fernando del Paso and *El tamaño del infierno* (1973) by the grandson of Mariano Azuela, Arturo Azuela. But *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*, thematically a traditional novel, is at the same time one of the great experimental novels of Mexico and indeed of Latin America. Here Fuentes boldly experiements with multiple times, spaces, with fragmented point of view, as well as with continual variations in style, tempo, and tone. Similarly, one of Fuentes' most recent novels, *La cabeza de la hidra* (1978) seems on the surface to be a traditional novel, falling into the popular genre of the spy thriller. It is replete with fact-paced action, with mystery and suspense, with throat slashings and chases and shootouts and international spy rings. Yet it too, like *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*, like the highly ambiguous *Cambio de piel*, is an extremely complex, experimental novel, one that fuses action and character development with the mythic and the metaphysical, and that merges literary texts like Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* with filmscripts like *Casablanca*.

But it is in *Terra nostra* that Fuentes' art of synthesis achieves its maximum development. In a major sense, the Cervantes created by Fuentes in *Terra nostra*—a *persona* of Fuentes himself—is a bridge figure between two antagonistic cultures—Christianity and Islam, just as Fuentes in *Terra nostra* itself acts as a bridge figure between two other great antagonistic cultures—that of Spain and the indigenous civilizations of the New World. And just as Fuentes seeks through his art to preserve the glories of Spain, as reflected in the three great figures from her Golden Age literature—the Celestina, Don Quijote, and Don Juan, all of whom are transplanted by Fuentes to Latin America, so too is Cervantes seen as desirous of preserving the Moorish culture, which he seeks not to extirpate, as do his masters, but to synthesize with that of Christian Spain:

> miró los rasgados pendones del Islam, las menguantes lunas, las derrotadas estrellas, y él mismo se sintió derrotado porque luchaba contra algo que no odiaba y porque no entendía el odio fratricida entre los hijos de los profetas de Arabia y de Israel y porque amaba y agradecía y distinguía y salvaba los méritos de las culturas, aunque ni las crueldades de los poderes, conocía y amaba las fuentes y jardines y patios y altas torres de al-Andalus, la naturaleza re-creada por el hombre para el placer del hombre y no aniquilada para su mortificación, como en la necrópolis del Señor don Felipe; rodeado de los inextinguibles fuegos de las galeras, entonó una muda plegaria para que los pueblos de las tres religiones se amasen y reconociesen y viviesen en paz adorando a un mismo Dios único y sin rostro y sin cuerpo alguno, Dios sólo poderoso nombre de la suma de nuestros deseos, Dios sólo signo del encuentro y la fraternidad de las sabidurías, los goces, las recreaciones de la mente y el cuerpo. (TN, 253)

It is significant that the idealistic center of the Hispanic part of *Terra nostra*, Mihail-ben-Sama, Miguel de la Vida, the living fusion of *las tres castas*, Moorish, Christian, and Jew, is one of the prime subjects of the art of Fuentes' fictional Cervantes. The relationship between the *cronista* and the mysterious youth who defies the authority of Felipe and who is executed by the monarch by being burned at the stake—the fact that they are soulmates in idealism—is underscored through their sharing of the same name: Miguel. And both of these figures are reflected in another great unifying character—the new World Pilgrim, the ardent questor for a New World Utopia and the counterfigure to the ambitious, scheming, and ruthless Guzmán—himself a combination of the rapacious and oppressive *conquistador* Nuño de Guzmán and the wily, opportunistic Hernán Cortés. The anonymous New World Pilgrim, his lack of a specific name emphasizing his composite and highly mutable identity, is developed in terms of the god of love and of life Quetzalcóatl, as Fuentes, in the part of *Terra nostra* entitled "El nuevo mundo," imaginatively explores the *what if* possibilities of the Conquest. What if, instead of the false Quetzalcóatl adored by Moctezuma—the cunning, avaricious and despotic Cortés who donned the mere mask of the liberating god Quetzalcóatl but who proved

himself to be an emanation of the bellicose Huitzilopochtli, the true Plumed Serpent had indeed returned from the East where he had gone after departing from Mexico on a raft of serpents. Instead of the *conquistador* Cortés, whose purposes were to dominate, destroy, and enslave, what if the genuine Quetzalcóatl had returned to claim his kingdom in a peaceable manner—and to liberate the Indian peoples from the despotic power of the Aztecs—as indeed they fervently believed that Cortés would do?

Fuentes' New World Pilgrim is developed, like both Miguel de la Vida and Miguel de Cervantes, as a bridge figure, one who earnestly attempts to join both Hispanic and Indian cultures through his emphasis on altruism, peace, self-sacrifice, and love. Yet this transcendental figure, departing to the New World from Spain, who cannot recall his name or his specific background, but who has vague memories of desert regions and palm trees and who thus indicates that he is linked with Christ, is in Fuentes' work a fated figure—one who as the New World god Quetzalcóatl is doomed to arrive and depart endlessly from Mexico; one who throughout the ages will ceaselessly return only to be ceaselessly rejected. Even at the beginning of the second millenium, this manifestation of Quetzalcóatl is seen as once again in exile, this time in France, with the remnants of the Indian treasure, that he intends to use to support a new resistance movement. At one point in the narrative, the New World Pilgrim attempts, on the linguistic level—the only level that remains open to him—to join the two cultures that are predestined for antagonism. Here, in the eloquent, heartfelt words of the New World Pilgrim, that ring out like a prayer, that are the New World equivalent to the anguished plea for unity made by Cervantes, is found not only the guiding aesthetic principle of *Terra nostra,* that of an incessant unifying of diverse characters, epochs, cultures, philosophies, theologies, theogonie, but also the basic theme of the essay. *Cervantes o la crítica* is a document that, through the noble and, in the twentieth century, supremely noncontroversial figure of Cervantes—universally acclaimed and therefore not a symbol to New World intellectuals of Spanish imperialism, bridges the tremendous gap between Spain and Mexico, between the conquerors and the conquered. Fuentes' quest for a redemptive unity between Old World and new is startlingly dramatized through the very style of the narrative, through the words depicted in the process of linguistically blending into one another:

> Venus, Venus, Vésperes, Vísperas, Hésperes, Héspero, Hesperia, España, Vespaña, nombre de la estrella doble, gemela de sí misma, crepúsculo y alba constantes, estela de plata que unía al viejo y al nuevo mundo, y de uno me llevaba al otro, arrastrado por su cauda de fuego, estrella de las vísperas, estrella de la aurora, serpiente de plumas, mi nombre en el mundo nuevo era el nombre del viejo mundo, Quetzalcóatl, Venus, Hesperia, España, dos estrellas que son la misma, alba y crepúsculo, misteriosa unión, enigma indescrifrable, mas cifra de dos cuerpos, de dos tierras, de un terrible encuentro. (TN, 493-494)

It is important to note the spirit of reconciliation between Mexico and Spain with which Fuentes also begins the essay, a spirit that is rare in the supernationalistic literature of Mexico, because this spirit of rapprochement pervades the entire work:

> México, al reconocerse, acabó por reconocer su auténtica herencia española y defenderla con la pasión de quien ha rescatado a su padre de la incomprensión y del olvido. (9)

As opposed to the many contemporary Latin American artists and intellectuals who pride themselves on not having in their libraries a collection of Spanish literature, or who reduce Spain's vast and extraordinary literary achievement to but a few isolated authors in the Golden Age, or who, like Jorge Luis Borges, first read the *Quixote* in English and then, coming upon the Spanish original, regarded it as but "una pobre traducción"; and in contrast to the many impassioned *indigenistas* who are opposed to anything Spanish primarily because it is Spanish, Fuentes in *Cervantes o la crítica* renderes an eloquent homage to Spain, both Spain of the Golden Age and the new, democratic Spain that has emerged in the post-Franco era. The quest for the origins of the Mexican people has always been a vital part of Fuentes' art, as it has that of Octavio Paz. Many of Fuentes' works have penetratingly explored the indigenous origins of the Mexican national character; but in *Terra nostra* and in the essay, Fuentes concentrates on the Spanish foundations of the Mexican identity. In another provocative essay, included in his collection *Tiempo mexicano* and entitled "Tiempo is pánico" or "(His)Panic Time," Fuentes has emphasized the panic experienced by many Mexicans in confronting their national father. It has been repeatedly pointed out that there are no statues to Cortés in Mexico, in contrast to the monuments to Pizarro in Perú. But just as in centuries past, when the colossal, for some monstrous statue of the Aztec goddess Coatlicue—symbolic of the Indian face of Mexico—was unearthed, only quickly to be buried again, because Mexicans shuddered at and could not contemplate this dread Aztec visage of themselves—the burial strikingly symbolic of the repression for centuries of Mexico's indigenous identity, so in the twentieth century has this extreme reluctance to contemplate the national self been shifted to Spain and the tremendous Spanish heritage in Mexico.[4] Yet, unlike many of his countrymen, Fuentes has no qualms in gazing on this Spanish face of Mexico:

> El tiempo hispánico también es tiempo de México: omnipresente pero ocultado, vehículo original de la tradición occidental, tiempo de la Conquista y de la Colonia, rechazado por la Independencia y por la subsecuente confianza dada a los tiempos ingleses, franceses y norteamericanos; rescatarlo, comprenderlo, es una empresa que nos llena de pánico; preferimos negarlo o exaltarlo; aún no aprendimos a socializarlo.[5]

In works such as *Todos los gatos son pardos*, Fuentes has placed negative emphasis on the absent national father—the Spain that has continually been

domineering and aloof toward its colonial possessions, symbolized by Cortés' action of abandoning La Malinche, the symbol of Indian Mexico, and marrying a Spanish noblewoman. In *Terra nostra*, Fuentes stresses that the Spanish monarchs from the sixteenth century to the present will never visit their New World dominions—an estrangement only recently broken when King Juan Carlos finally made a visit to Latin America in the late seventies.

Yet in *Cervantes o la crítica*, Fuentes refers positively to Spain as "esa otra mitad de nuestra vida y de nuestra herencia" (11), emphasizing the solidarity of Mexico with Republican Spain. In *Terra nostra*, in *Cervantes o la crítica*, and in other essays as well, Fuentes views the Spanish language as a great unifying force between Old World and New. In his provocative essay, "El español,¿lengua imperial, medicante o humano?", Fuentes again adopts a diplomatic, conciliatory role between two extremes—those who represent minority cultures in Spain and who attack the Spanish language as a tool of the fascist dictatorship, and, on the other hand, those in the New World, this time in the United States, who refuse to speak the Spanish language because of the stigma they attach to it as the language of the oppressed and the enslaved in colonial Spain. As both a Latin American and a Mexican, Fuentes is aware of his right, equal to or exceeding that of any other group, to condemn the Spanish language as "la lengua del imperio." Yet he refuses to do so, and instead, at the international P.E.N. conference responds to the outcries of the Catalonians who seek to substitute their own language for what they brand as: "la tiranía durante cuarenta años contra las demás lenguas peninsulares." Fuentes defends the Spanish language, characterizing it not as an oppressor but as the victim itself of the fascist Spanish regime, a language that has been "pervertida, allamada, convertida en vehículo de opresión, vaciedad y mentira."[6] Fuentes speaks as a Mexican, the product of the violent clash between Spanish and indigenous cultures with the result that the civilization, including the language, codices, architecture and many other facets of that culture were all but exterminated by the victors. Yet he makes a strong distinction between the language itself and those few who have debased it. The Spanish language for Fuentes is evoked as a great compensating force—one that in its key unifying function counteracts a whole series of devastating political, economic, and military rivalries among the diverse Latin America nations, as well as a crippling geographical isolation—forces that militate against a unified Latin America:

> Lo extraordinario es que esa lengua se haya convertido en el signo prácticamente único de la unidad y la libertad de las naciones colonizadas por España . . . Todo nos separa, sólo nos une esta lengua común de los pueblos chileno y mexicano, argentino y cubano, de los negros y blancos e indios y mestizos, de los hombres del desierto y el río, de la pampa y la cordillera.[7]

Terra nostra constitutes not only a major homage to the Spanish language in general but also to an artistic style—the baroque—that achieved a superlative development in Golden Age Spain and in contemporary Latin American literature—in authors such as Fuentes, Lezama Lima, and

Carpentier. Indeed, the definition of the baroque given by one of the characters of *Terra nostra* also constitutes a description of this dense and grandiose work itself. Ludovico describes to Felipe the positive contributions that Julián has made to the New World, chief among which is the legacy of a marvellous creative all-encompassing style:

> —¿Construyó sus iglesias, pintó sus pinturas, recogió la voz de los vencidos?, dijo con acento cada vez más angustido, Felipe.
> —Sí, sí afirmó ahora Ludovico, hizo cuanto dices; lo hizo bajo el signo de una creación singular, capaz según él de trasladar al arte y a la vida la visión total del universo que es la de la ciencia nueva . . .
> —¿Cómo se llama esa creación, y qué es?
> —Llámase barroco, y es una floración inmediata: tan plena, que su juventud es su madurez, y su magnificencia, su cáncer. Un arte, Felipe, que como la naturaleza misma, aborrece el vacío: llena cuántos la realidad le ofrece. Su prolongación es su negación. Nacimiento y muerte son para este arte un acto único: su apariencia es su fijeza, y puesto que abarca totalmente la realidad que escoge, llenándola totalmente, es incapaz de extensión o desarrollo. (TN,744)

Fuentes has written an important prologue to one of the works of another great Latin American master of the baroque, Alejo Carpentier. Like Fuentes, Carpentier is also a bridge novelist between New World and Old, and in works such as *Los pasos perdidos*, *Concierto barroco*, and *El arpa y la sombra*, the last being a poetic re-creation of perhaps the greatest historical "bridge" figure between Spain and the New World, Christopher Columbus, Carpentier expertly synthesizes Old World and New World visions, myths, languages, and sociopolitical realities. In his prologue to Carpentier's novel *El siglo de las luces*, which begins in the New World but ends in Spain, as the two major characters, the Cubans Sofía and Esteban, sacrifice their lives as they join the rebellion of the Spanish against the French invaders under Napoleon, Fuentes adopts an attitude of both challenge and reconciliation with *la madre patria*. Focussing this time on the literature of Latin America, Fuentes portrays it as a paradox, as both a defiance of the effete, official language of the Spanish *imperium*, the language of the New World *conquistadores*, and yet also as a tribute to the resurgent vitality of the splendid Spanish literary tradition, now being upheld by New World authors:

> la literatura en lengua española de las Américas es la respuesta común del nuevo mundo al idioma de los conquistadores y los colonizadores de nuestra tierra, una regeneración de su fuerza a partir de la experiencia americana del lenguaje, un asalto a sus ortodoxias inservibles, una falta de respeto, sí, una devolución de las carabelas cargadas de oro y excrementos verbales, pero también un retorno, en tierras de América, a la grandeza imaginativa y al riesgo literario del Arcipreste de Hita; de Fernando de Rojas, de Miguel de Cervantes, de Quevedo y de Gongóra.[8]

It is significant that once again, as in *Terra nostra* and *Cervantes o la crítica*, Fuentes stresses the literary continuity not between nineteenth and twentieth century Spain and the New World, but between Spain's greatest literary period and Latin America. Indeed, as we shall see at a later point, Fuentes sees Spain's contemporary novel as a branch of Latin American literature.

It is interesting to contrast the reconciliation with Spain advocated by Fuentes with the lacerating vision toward Spain of one of that country's leading contemporary authors, Juan Goytisolo. In Goytisolo's mordant and demythifying works, such as *Reinvindicación del conde Julián* and another novel that has a title which both parallels *Terra nostra* and is antithetical to it, *Juan sin tierra*, Goytisolo's world is one of languages and cultures in combat. It is highly significant that Goytisolo ends *Juan sin tierra* not in Spanish but in Arabic—in what is both an homage to the Moorish Spain that the dominant Spain had expelled and whose influence it had attempted to suppress, but also an indication of the cleft, the chasm between these two cultures. Fuentes, on the other hand, does not write any section of *Terra nostra* in *nahuatl* even though he treats at length the Aztec Mexico of the time of the Conquest and the indigenous theogonies, for to do so would emphasize the nonintegration of the two cultures, underscoring them as isolated and perhaps even permanently antagonistic forces, whereas Fuentes throughout his works—*La región más transparente, Todos los gatos son pardos, Terra nostra,* emphasizes the Mexican identity as the *mestizo* identity, the fusion of Indian and Spanish. Thus, in *Terra nostra,* the Aztec Emperor Moctezuma speaks in a Spanish that is in effect two idioms fused together—the Castilian lexicon and syntax, but the rhythms, repetitions, and intensifications of *nahuatl*:

> —No, no es que yo sueñe, no me levanto del sueño adormilado: no te veo en sueños, no te estoy soñando . . .
> ¡Es que te he visto, es que ya he puesto mis ojos en tu rostro! Y tú has venido entre nubes, entre nieblas. (463)

In addition, the twenty bronzed youths envisioned by the New World Pilgrim, twenty to symbolize the sacred number in the Indian cosmology, do not speak in *nahuatl* but in a Spanish that again incorporates the lilting harmonies of the Aztec tongue. Thus, even on the linguistic level, Fuentes is a constant synthesizer, combining the best of both cultures, stressing the need for the dominant culture to be the voice of the dominated. Fuentes recreates and celebrates the *nahuatl* language, capturing its beauty and eloquence, while at the same time emphasizing its irrevocable fusion with Spanish to create a new, Mexican language. By preserving the grace, the poetic intensity, and the mystery of *nahuatl* within the Spanish language, Fuentes once again adopts a midline position between the fanatic *indigenistas* on the one hand, who advocate an adoption by Mexico of the Aztec tongue, and, on the other hand those who ignore, disdain, or suppress Mexico's extremely important and still vital indigenous heritage.

In both *Terra nostra* and *Cervantes o la crítica*, the essay that, as we have seen, is not a mere critical exposition but a creative work of art in its own right, the synthesizing power of Fuentes' imagination leaps over the centuries to fuse characters across time and space. Thus, in *Terra nostra*, the dictatorial figure of Felipe merges into that of Francisco Franco, just as the mausoleumlike Escorial merges into the gigantic mausolem constructed by Franco in the Valle de los Caídos. The Rome of Tiberius, depicted at a point near his death, portrayed as an Emperor mired in delusions and awash in decadence, cut off from his people, revelling in his solitude and in his absolute power, is but the fatalistic anticipation of the deluded and tyrannical Felipe, also alone, severely estranged from the life of his kingdom, exalting himself as the sole and absolute ruler of his kingdom when in fact that Empire is rapidly disintegrating, just as is the Rome of Tiberius. This is the same process of identity fusion that Fuentes utilizes in the essay—not to underscore the operation of a fatalistic, cyclical time, as he does in *Terra nostra*, in which both the present and the future are but the duplication of an oppressive past, but in a far more positive way—dramatically to underscore the unity and the continuity of literature, and indeed, of all the humanistic disciplines, across the ages. Thus Fuentes leaps strikingly from the medieval heretics to twentieth century novelists like Barth, Goytisolo, and Stoppard, or from Don Quixote to Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin. These bold imaginative leaps serve to open up literature, to restore it to its true place within the other humanistic disciplines—history, philosophy, visual art, religion:

> Su reciclaje de las verdades inconmovibles de la Iglesia no es demasiado diferente de lo que muchos escritores contemporáneos (Italo Calvino, John Barth, Juan Goytisolo, John Gardner, Guy Davenport, Tom Stoppard) hacen: reelaborar antiguas creencias o historias menos lejanas en los moldes de la metamorfosis. (23)

The most important of these "amalgamations" of Fuentes is that between Cervantes and Joyce, *el abuelo del Boom* and the Father of the Boom, respectively. The totalization impulse, a term used by Fuentes in his *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* to characterize the art of Mario Vargas Llosa, is in *Cervantes o la crítica* linked with Cervantes, and with the Irish author who is depicted as the Cervantes of the twentieth century. And once again, the terms in which Fuentes depicts the art of both James and Cervantes apply equally as well to his own creative production:

> Cervantes y Joyce son los dos ejemplos supremos mediante los cuales la ficción moderna, en sus extremos, totaliza sus intenciones y se reconoce a sí misma . . . En Cervantes y en Joyce, es particularmente agudo el conflicto de la gestación verbal, la lucha entre la renovación y el tributo debido a la forma anterior; en ellos, el destino de las palabras es su origen y el origen de las palabras es su destino. (97)

The same linguistic bridge-building techniques, which Fuentes has so stunningly utilized in *Terra nostra*, as the New World pilgrim/god spins an elaborate bridge of words in a desperate attempt to ward off a conflict between two worlds that is inevitable, is also found in *Cervantes o la crítica*:

> España e Irlanda, Hispania y Hesperia, dueñas de la misma raíz, tierras de la doble estrella, Venus, Hésperes, primera luz del crepúsculo y última luz del alba, Venus, estrella-espejo, gemela de sí misma, brillando sobre los pueblos de las tierras de las Vísperas, España e Irlanda, tierras del eterno velorio. Tierras de las espera. (98)

This innovative use of an associational, stream-of-consciousness style, one that incorporates plays on words like *Hesperia/espera* and uncommon word fusions like *estrella-espejo*, demonstrates how Fuentes, like Alfonso Reyes before him in his poetically imaginative essay on the Mexico at the time of the Conquest *Visión del Anahuac*, has remarkably expanded the essay as an artistic form, through his creative exuberance and his linguistic verve and power.

And, once again, as so often in Fuentes' art, in which the individual, the national, and the universal are blended with great skill, we can descry the third corner of this national triangle: Spain, Ireland, and the other nation that Fuentes in another essay has characterized as eccentric in the literal sense of the term, outside of the center—Mexico. Once again Cervantes and Joyce merge into Fuentes: "ambos surgidos de países excéntricos, de países devorados y desvelados por la reflexión sobre su propio ser" (97–98). Similar to Spain and Ireland and perhaps, in the twentieth century, more than either of these two countries, Mexico is obsessed with the problem of defining itself, with untangling and understanding the complex strands of *la mexicanidad*. Throughout his many novels, plays, and essays, Fuentes has, paradoxically, both attacked and demythified the official "mexicanidad" and yet constructed his own mythic Mexico.

In addition to being the prolongation of *Terra nostra*, which several critics have regarded as so Gargantuan that it would have exhausted creative possibilities, *Cervantes o la crítica* is a continuation of another masterful work of synthesis by Fuentes, one that also unites Latin America and Spain by incorporating both Latin American and Spanish authors into the same positive framework, *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (1969). Here Fuentes not only analyzes the works of the novelists of the Boom, but in a concluding chapter extends Latin American experimental fiction to Spain by including Juan Goytisolo as a Boom author:

> Goytisolo emprende la más urgente tarea de la novela española: destruir un lenguaje viejo, crear uno nuevo y hacer de la novela el vehículo de esta operación. Su obra se convierte así en el puente que une a dos fenómenos literarios de idéntico signo idiomático aunque de actitud radicalmente opuesta ante ese signo: la novela española y la novela hispanoamericana. . . . Con Goytisolo, el español escrito en España deja de ser el lenguaje de los señores para revelarse, igual que un la América Española, como el lenguaje de los parias.[9]

Once again novel and essay merge; the reunion of the leading authors of the Boom in *La nueva novela* anticipates the reunion of the characters from their novels at the end of *Terra nostra*, as Horacio Oliveira, Santiago Zavalita, Humberto el mudito, La Estrella and Cuba Venegas, Coronel Aureliano Buendía, all are portrayed as exiles from their native countries who meet together in Paris. Throughout *Terra nostra* as throughout *Cervantes o la crítica*, the space of fiction is equated with the space of liberation, which is the primary concern of the discussion of these characters. These figures have been denied a geographical, political, and economic space, just as it has been denied, sometimes repeatedly, to many of their creators. It is extremely ironic that these fictional refugees should encounter their *terra nostra* not in any Latin American country but in Paris, which for Fuentes in *Terra nostra* as well as in *Una familia lejana* (1980) is both the geographical and the spiritual center of the work. Counterpointing the fatalistic year of 1521, which marks for Fuentes the imposition of tyranny both in Spain and in the Spanish New World, the year of the consummation of the Conquest by Cortés, who devastated Mexico-Tenochtitlan and the year in which the *comuneros* were defeated by Carlos V, is the day of freedom with which *Terra nostra* begins: July 14, 1999—Bastille Day. Another concluding irony is that the New World created by Polo Febo and Celestina after the apocalypse is not in the New World discovered by Columbus but in the Old World, in Paris.

In a major sense, Fuentes' remarkable essay continues the distinguished tradition of writings on *Don Quijote* by outstanding modern Hispanic authors that perhaps acquire their deepest significance as revelatory not only of Cervantes' art but of the mind and soul of the modern author. *Cervantes o la crítica* is the most recent manifestation of a long tradition that includes Miguel de Unamuno's *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho*, Ortega y Gasset's *Meditaciones sobre el Quijote*, and in Hispanic America, Juan Montalvo's *Capítulos que se le olvidaron a Cervantes*, Borges' short story, "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote," and Agustín Yáñez's story, included in *La ladera dorada*, "La boda de Don Quijote," in which as in *Terra nostra*, author and character, Cervantes and Don Quijote, both are re-created as fictional entities. The remark that the narrator of Borges' story makes concerning Menard's laboriously re-created *Quijote*—literally, an exact duplication of Cervantes' text, but connotatively and spiritually a mirror of the aesthetics of Menard and of the intellectual preoccupations of his period—the twentieth century—applies as well to the *Quijote* not only imaginatively interpreted but re-created in their own image by Fuentes, Ortega, Unamuno, and Yáñez:

> He reflexionado que es lícito ver en el Quijote "final" una especie de palimpsesto, en el que deben traslucirse los rostros—tenues pero no indescifrables—de la "previa" escritura de nuestro amigo.[10]

In conclusion, we may see Fuentes' *Cervantes o la crítica* as a fascinating amalgam. It first of all provides a provocative new interpretation of Cer-

vantes' classic novel, proving once again that *Don Quijote,* which has generated mountains of critical commentary, continues to be a vast generating text. In both novel and essay, Fuentes ringingly affirms the most positive and the most enduring legacy of Spain to the New World—the richness, expressiveness, and dynamism of its language; and the vibrancy and contemporaneity of its great character creations: Celestina, Don Juan, and Don Quijote.

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NOTES

1. See the excellent study on this epic work of Fuentes by Juan Goytisolo entitled "*Terra nostra*" and included in his collection of essays *Disidencias* (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 1977), pp. 236-237.

2. Carlos Fuentes, *Cervantes o la crítica de la lectura* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1976), p. 9. Subsequent references are included in the text.

3. Carlos Fuentes, *Terra nostra* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1975), p. 615. Subsequent references are included in the text, preceded by TN.

4. Octavio Paz discusses this curious and yet highly symbolic disinterment and reburial in his essay "El arte de México: materia y sentido," included in *In/mediaciones* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1979), pp. 51-53. Paz recounts the placing by the Viceroy Revillagigedo of the immense "Coatlicue Mayor" in the Real y Pontífica Universidad de México, which had previously been given a collection of Greek and Roman statues by Carlos III. Perhaps the enormous contrast between the Greco-Roman concept of divinity—the divine that is the perfection of the human, and the Aztec concept of the divine as monstrously inhuman, a divinity with a necklace of human skulls and a skirt of serpents and two gigantic serpents in place of a head—produced the horror of the statue and caused it to be quickly banished from the museum. According to Paz, the first disinterment was in 1790, and in 1804, as a result of the request of Baron von Humboldt, the statue was again unearthed, so that the illustrious investigator could examine it—and then quickly reburied! Once more, according to Paz, "La presencia de la estatua terrible era insoportable."

5. Consult Carlos Fuentes, *Tiempo mexicano* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1971), p. 43.

6. Carlos Fuentes, "El español, ¿lengua imperial, mendicante o humano?", in *Vuelta,* 23 (octubre de 1978), p. 32.

7. *Ibid.,* p. 32.

8. Consult Alejo Carpentier, *El siglo de las luces,* Prologue by Carlos Fuentes (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1979), IX.

9. Carlos Fuentes, *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1969), pp. 81-82.

10. Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote,*" included in his collection *Ficciones* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1956), p. 56.

Hoy estoy triste y no he llorado
será porque me he vaciado
en el volcán de flores pálidas
o que me quedé olvidado
en unos ojos lejanos.

Hoy
he sentido morir una rosa
en unas manos arrugadas
y he visto nacer cenizas
en una mirada lánguida de fantasma
en una tierra jamás por mí pisada.

. . . los mensajes atrasados
me han tocado las puertas
y no he querido escucharlos
en unos labios apagados.

Hoy he vuelto a estar triste . . . tris-te,
y no he llorado

Manuel Figueroa-Meléndez
University of California,
Los Angeles

Ha sentido otra vez
la tinta amarga
que se cruza en mi pecho
al ver en la calle correr
el agua . . .

. . . miradas pasmadas
se coagulan a lo largo
esperando las grietas
que sus sueños secan.

Aquél l e v a n t aaa su vela
con suavidad mohosa,
el otro deja posar chorros
en sus cristales con sonrisa
arcaica.

El ladrillo desgasta su espesura
y la balaustrada se arruga
sobre las aceras
de mi Ciudad Legendaria

La tinta amarga de mi alma.

Manuel Figueroa-Meléndez
University of California,
Los Angeles

EL LOCO

Con incierta proa, enfila el navío de
su inquieta persona hacia Market Street
o el Tenderloin. De pronto se detiene
y comienza a esculpir el aire que le rodea:
con las manos, con el gesto, con el cuerpo
todo, que no parece que su completa humanidad sea
otra cosa sino puros martillo y cincel
gigantescos.

Ahora cesa en su artístico empeño; dirige
unas palabras a una audiencia invisible, que
debe acogerlas con gusto placentero, porque
el loco, asintiendo después de su discurso,
complacido sonríe.

Debe de ser un sabio; no hay que olvidar
que el loco, ¡afortunado él!, es narrador
tercero y omnisciente quien Freud no
podría desposeer de nada: a saber si en
alianza con misteriosos fluidos y consuelos,
es el loco partícipe de un secreto de esfinge
que le ha hecho dueño afortunado de un Yo in-
tegral, entero y sin fragmentos formado a la
par por ojo exterior y subconsciencia.

Otra vez, inesperadamente, el loco emprende
la batalla del aire. A juzgar por el empeño que
pone en darle traza y forma, debe de ser el
aire enemigo espantable, trasgo horripilante:
la conciencia, quizaś, que envidiosa y latente,
sin tregua ni cuartel, intenta invadir los
liberados espacios vitales del chalado.

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Inconsciência de classes num conto de Lima Barreto

A ressurgência, nos anos recentes, de interesse em Lima Barreto, o homem, a obra, e a crítica, gera-se direitamente da ressurgência atrasada do interesse político geral pela literatura, embora este interesse, nas mentes dos próprios críticos, passe por outras perspectivas "não políticas" muitas vezes sintetizadas inconscientemente das críticas formalistas e socio-literárias. Não há, assim parece, melhor sujeito e temp brasileiros sobre que disputar. Mas o pugilato diminui rapidamente pelas mesmas razões políticas temporais pelas quais o sujeito ficou relativamente intratado assim quanto ficou. A luta sobre Lima Barreto diminui não pela razão de haver nada que disputar, mas pelo motivo de que os contestantes até agora têm chegado a acordo rápido e restrito. A linha centrista deste acordo foi bem expressado há poucos anos pelo exponente principal de liberalismo dentro da crítica literária brasileira—ele corretamente identifica as feições essenciais da escritura de Lima Barreto como o foco dele nos problemas primariamente humanos e sociais, como a análise e exposição do cotidiano, e a missão passionalmente pessoal de melhorar a condição humana. Porém, mais significante—e isto é o rótulo partidário que reúne todos os contestantes até agora—o grande crítico liberal indica o que ele acha ser o problema, isto é, a falta principal, da obra de Lima Barreto: que Lima Barreto sacrifica o belo ao real.[1] Sem dúvida, o crítico tem apontado o chão do problema, isto é, a contradição, principal na obra de Lima Barreto. O que a crítica liberal abstratamente posa em categorias ideológicas e eternas é aqui concretamente posto em termos de análise de classes convindo a natureza bem ineterna do assunto.

Selecionemos para análise o conto "Sua Excelência." Lima Barreto originalmente o escreveu em *Os Bruzundangas*, entregue ao editor em 1917, mas só publicado em 1923, depois de aparecer como conto solto em *Histórias e Sonhos* publicado em 1920.[2] Estes dois volumes contêm alguma da ficção mais política de Lima Barreto, no sentido de ser uma crítica mordaz e dura da sociedade burguesa. A versão original de 1917 e a edição de 1920 são em essência a mesma. No prefácio, intitulado "Amplius," na edição de 1920, Lima Barreto diz, em dando um caráter crítico a toda a coleção de contos:

> Não desejamos mais uma literatura contemplativa . . . mas uma literatura militante para a maior glória da nossa especie na terra e mesmo no Céo.[3]

O conto "Sua Excelência" é escolhido dentre todos aqui porque ele sintetiza os extremos estéticos e ideológicos da ficção em geral de Lima Barreto. Nos seus romances a preocupação psicológica com os personagens domina a tese social, ao passo que nos seus contos a tese social usualmente predomina. A essência de "Sua Excelência" se acha na combinação dos elementos

psicológicos a políticos. Quando o melhor estudo até agora sobre a ficção curta de Lima Barreto diz que "a thematic analysis of social issues involved in a Lima Barreto short story strikes at the heart of the author's very personal concept of literature and society," o conto "Sua Excelência" é precisamente relevante.[4]

Um dos objetivos dos escritores progressistas é cultivar a consciência de classes, literalmente. Em "Sua Excelência," Lima Barreto aponta a este fim por satirizar um estado de *in*consciência de classes, literariamente.

Com o conto "Sua Excelência," Lima Barreto traça e funda uma analogia de classes entre a ficção e a vida na sua obra picante *Os Bruzundangas,* onde num "Capítulo especial," no início da narrativa própria, ele apresenta o conto como um bom exemplar do folclore dos habitantes da "República dos Estados Unidos da Bruzundanga," um mundo imaginário e exótico em que o autor, à maneira de Swift, escarnece as contradições e trapalhadas da burguesia. O narrador, antes de tripular pelos costumes absurdos do mundo afora samoniédico, posa a "ingenuidade" do "canto popular . . . das coletividades humanas" contra as ridículas "belas-artes" parnasianas dos "literatos" bruzundanguenses a quem falta qualquer "profundeza de sentimento."[5] Nota-se, no análogo social sugerido no texto, que embora o narrador recuse a classe patronal, a sua atitude para com a classe trabalhadora é ambígua na sua visão dupla da gente como sincera mas ignorante. Mas mesmo assim, o autor engenhosamente atribui origem unânima e popular ao seu conto "Sua Excelência," cujas versões, ele aponta, circulam entre as massas como "O General e o Diabo," ou "O Padre e o Diabo."[6] Analogicamente, então, as duas classes principais se representam, a classe burguesa capitalista nas figuras dos patrões políticos, militares e sacerdotais, mas a classe trabalhadora na imagem do Diabo—uma classe aparentemente concreta enquanto a outra efêmera e quimérica. Com uma técnica reflexionista, Lima Barreto cria um jogo de reflexões, de sonhos e realidades, de ideologias e consciências.

O conto "Sua Excelência" é sobre um criado de libré que cochila sonhando ao pé de uma escadaria palaciana, enquanto o seu amo o Ministro está de negócios dentro do palácio imperial. O criado sonha com um Ministro que é levado numa viagem de coche fantástica e infernal por um cocheiro diabólico. No sonho, o Ministro, ao ponto de ser consumido nos fogos infernais, desmaia—a que ponto o criado sonhador se acorda apenas a reconhecer-se em uniforme de libré e a ver o Ministro descendo a escadaria palaciana, ao que o criado oferece à "Vossa Excelência" o coche.

Há dois pivôs em que gira a arte e a intenção do conto: o primeiro, no momento em que o Ministro sonhando desmaia e o criado sonhador desperta, é o acertar a reversão de papéis sociais de classes trocados no sonho; e o segundo, quando o criado acordado guia o Ministro real ao coche, é o redistribuir dos papéis em que o criado agora, em vez de sonhar consigo como Ministro, pode tomar o papel do cocheiro diabólico.

A ordem dos eventos narrados é porém didacticamente importante. O conto começa já no sonho, na inconsciência, do criado. Ao leitor, no início, a narração, parece real, mas, ao longo da narração até o ponto do

despertar do criado, multiplicam-se todos os sinais da irrealidade. Ao mais perto que aproximamo-nos da realidade e da consciência o mais irreal e inconsciente que pareça. No começo o leitor não sabe que é um sonho, menos o sonho de um criado de libré, mas chega a saber pelos sinais que é um estado de fantasia. De fato, no próprio início é o Ministro que está "a sonhar . . . só com o seu pensamento."[7] Cheio de si, ao sair de um baile palaciano onde ele encantara a companhia imperial com a sua oratória, o Ministro "cegamente" entra num "coupé" estranho onde ele cai totalmente ensimesmado (p. 27). Numa fantasia megalomaníaca o Ministro cai no delírio estático, em que uma força contrária se presenteia no sonho em que "o carro continuava a voar," convertido num "vehiculo agora" que "corria vertiginosamente" numa "nevoa phosphorescente" (p. 28). Também o tempo é abstrato, parado precisamente no momento do início do sonho. No imaginário, o Ministro fica vitimizado pelo próprio sonho, precessado por uma outra força que toma conta dele. No outro mundo, sumido no espaço e tempo, surge um calor infernal em que o Ministro fica completamente reduzido a um nada ridículo. O sonho do Ministro se converte em pesadelo, em sonho perdido, tomado por outro. O carro se converte em forno, e o cocheiro do Ministro, em vez do "seu fiel Manoel," converte-se num cocheiro "de nariz adunco, queixo longo com uma barbicha . . . os olhos . . . de um brilho brejeiro," e com um sorriso satânico—o Diabo mesmo (pp. 28–29.) O carro se torna finalmente uma cámara do fogo cujo calor intenso força o Ministro a se despir das suas roupas, símbolos do seu poder. Assim, desnudado e humilhado, morrendo numa dança macabra com os seus membros voando em estilhaços, o Ministro

> Desmaiou; e, ao recuperar os sentidos, viu-se vestido com uma réles "libré" e uma grotesca cartola, cochilando à porta do palacio em que estivera ainda ha pouco e de onde, saira triumphalmente, não havia minutos (p. 29).

O Ministro, aparentemente convertido em criado de libré, é fato o sonho do criado adormecido no seu serviço de libré. A ambigüidade para com o sujeito real marca a zona transitória em que o Ministro e o criado se confundem, em que o sonho e a vigilância se confundem, onde o patrão e o trabalhador se confundem—o espelho das classes em que uma se confunde com as suas próprias reflexões na outra. Momentariamente, o sujeito confuso se vê do ponto de vista do criado ao pé da escadaria palaciana em que a sua imagem sonhada desce no Ministro real emergindo do palácio. Na sua recuperação dos efeitos do sonho dele, o criado finalmente incorpora uma consciência ironicamente derivada da inconsciência do sonho:

> Logo que o personagem [o Ministro] pisou na soleira [na realidade], de um só impeto [o criado] approximou-se e, abjectamente, como so até ali não tivesse feito outra coisa, indagou:
> —V. Ex. quer o carro? (p. 29)

A confusão do criado para com a sua prória identidade vis a vis o Ministro se clarifica no seu abrupto reconhecimento de si na frente do amo, o

Ministro. E embora o criado continue servil e "de um só impeto . . . e abjectivamente" (inconsciente) no seu papel social do "fiel Manoel [Cristo]," o leitor fica consciente da ironia de imaginar o criado de libré no papel do cocheiro Diabo. Assim, de certo modo, o sonho começa de novo repetindo-se em versões imaginárias, inclusive a do ponto de vista do Diabo, e numa série de reversões de papéis.

Eis o sonho dentro do sonho. O narrador omnisciente parace narrar o sonho do criado desde o ponto de vista do Ministro, e assim, com tal artifício, identifica o criado com o Ministro, o sonhador com o sonhado. Ao mesmo tempo, o autor aproveita a visão crítica do seu narrador omnisciente por, acima de tudo, dar um tratamento irônico e satírico do Ministro na seqüência do sonho do criado, e do criado dentro da realidade. Essa ironia é a crítica—crítica política, se quiser—do Ministro e da classe dele. A exageração do personagem do Ministro ridiculiza também a identificação do criado com o Ministro, do trabalhador com o patrão. O Ministro é satirizado nos próprios termos da sua classe—o autor ridiculariza a oratória bombástica, a filosofia eclética, o sonho egoísta da classe patronal. O Ministro é uma caricatura sem consciência e assim o autor espera pouco dele nem da sua classe. A deshumanização do Ministro revela a opinião cínica do autor com respeito à classe governante. Mas o sonho é também do criado, e é a conduta dele o assunto da crítica, tanto a conduta de sonhar falsamente quanto a de trabalhar inconscientemente. A conduta satirizada é sonho de falsa consciência, ou, a inconsciência, e a servilidade inconsciente do criado. Mas o criado no fim do conto não é mais consciente quando acordado do que quando adormecido sonhando. E mais, pela introdução moralizante e cômica do Diabo no papel do cocheiro que engana o Ministro, o autor traça para o leitor uma identidade nova para o criado. Lima Barreto aqui combina a calderoneana 'vida es sueño' com a swifteana viagem pela absurdidade do mundo burguês, e com a sua própria torcedura no truque do engano que interlaça o leitor dentro do julgamento didático do conto.

"Sua Excelência" é, pois, uma alegoria política, com as personificações de classes e a apologia da conduta delas. A forma genérica e emblemática da narrativa é uma parábola política. O propósito da alegoria é criticar e julgar. A omnisciência do narrador crítico é o padrão e a medida da crítica. Uma visão alegórica, irônica e omnisciente é uma visão sintética, intermediária que, em termos de classes sociais, é a visão do meio, a visão de entre as duas classes principais. Tal visão sintética, isto é, ideológica, é pela própria natureza contraditória.

Pelas relações alegóricas estabelecidas pelo autor, o leitor é implicado entre o narrador e o criado. A simpatia narrativa está com o criado, ou abstratamente com a classe dele, e o objeto da lição didática é o leitor, e abstratamente a sua classe. A omnisciência narrativa exhonora o narrador, e implicitamente o autor, de qualquer autocrítica. Simpatia é longe da solidariedade. A omnisciência estética e ideológica do narrador é a visão média de sonhar consiga como se fosse a sobrevisão, sim, a supervisão—é a classe média elevando-se sobre as duas classes principais cujo conflito é o engenho do própio sonho do autor. O Ministro e o criado no conto são

trancados imudáveis num círculo vicioso, com o diabo do artista revoltado mexendo no meio. Como resultado, o objectivo da crítica é reformar as relações implicadas, reformar as relações entre Ministro e criado. O jogo de ambigüidades, reversos, e vacilações de papéis sociais é a expressão artística de valores pequeno burgueses. A estética e a ideologia da sátira pequeno burguesa assume, assim preserva, o que satiriza e que então sobrevive a sátira e o sátirista. Reformismo de relações de classes é o propósito moral da alegoria política de Lima Barreto.

Posar a contradição geral das classes sociais como um círculo vicioso superado só pela arte e ironia revela o embargado do autor à metafísica determinista. Há o intento forte de criticar; não peticiona pateticamente à classe governante. Focaliza na figura explorada e oprimida que, no fim, continua patética e ignorante. Mas reduzir o patrão à paródia ou ao burlesco é não entender a essência vital do capitalista—mudança revolucionária fica para além do programa da sátira. Avisar o trabalhador a não esperar libertação no sonho falso é o limite do reformismo. Pelo menos indica que sonhar em ser patrão é sempre pesadelo. O empurrão talvez mais progressista do conto é a sugestão de que o explorado e oprimido tome o papel do Diabo e leve o explorador e opressor numa viagem fantástica que acaba com a desintegração dele.

Também a escolha de representantes de classes por parte do autor para contar a sua história e fazer a sua crítica reflete valores essencialmente idealistas, reformistas e pequeno burgueses. Lima Barreto escolhe uma relação patriarcal, característica das relações sociais mais atrasadas da época, basicamente a roupagem aristocrática da ordem republicana burguesa, especialmente da República Velha. A relação senhor-criado escolhida pelo autor já é ultrapassada pela relação capital-trabalho, capitalista-proletário, no próprio tempo de Lima Barreto. A relação de classes no conto é uma distorção pelo anacronismo. E do anacronismo ao sonho é a seqüência à loucura—Lima Barreto nos leva onde Dom Quixote já passou.[8] A sátira política assume que o satirizado é redimível, e assim merece conservação.

O subdesenvolvimento da consciência do personagem do criado de libré no conto se deriva da inconsciência narrativa do conto—entre as duas classes principais, recusadas e invertidas pelo autor, move um narrador que

> era uma contradição viva. De um lado, ia em marcha avante, mas, de outro lado, voltava se para o passado morto. De um lado era o escritor progressista, o satírico e o revoltado, o analista e o crítico social, mas, de outro lado, era afilhado de Nossa Senhora da Glória e do Visconde de Ouro Preto—um dos mais reacionários ministros da monarquia escravista.[9]

O ímpeto de tal oscilação é a fuga ao marginal social e histórico. A alienação que aflige o criado intensifica-se no autor cujo imaginário é onde se encontra, no espelho do sonho dentro do sonho, a inversão da consciência e inconsciência, com os pés numa classe e a cabeça na outra.[10]

A perspectiva reformista do conto é da visão desde dentro do círculo vicioso das classes. O Ministro é caricatura moribunda pela arte, também

o criado pela história. O conto vê o antagonismo entre as classes como solúvel e reconciliável através duma ética transcendente que aparentemente não tem nada que ver com qualquer das classes. [11] Tal avalição da relação violenta e irreconciliável das classes demonstra o humanismo burguês que inspira o autor que pretende "ligar a humanidade" e instituir "a comunhão dos homens de todas as raças e classes."[12] Este idealismo é o que faz de Lima Barreto "um dos maiores representantes da linha humanista e democrático-popular na literatura brasileira."[13] Como um crítico diz: "Há nele uma tendência para o materialismo, [mas há tambén] uma crença viva na teoria transformista."[14] Transformismo, reformismo, metafísica. Eis o medir e criticar o presente pelo passado, até que o autor "chegava . . . a confrontar o sistema republicano desfavoravelmente com o regime monárquico no Brasil."[15] Lima Barreto mede a realidade pelo sonho, pelo estado de inconsciência onde "todas as lutas dentro do estado, a luta dentre a democracia, a aristocracia, e a monarquia . . . são meramente as formas ilusórias . . . nas quais as lutas reais das diferentes classes são pelejadas entre si mesmas."[16] O que é a verdade para o criado de libré também a é para o autor, *e* para um leitor que não aprende "que 'espectros,' 'laços cativeiros,' 'o ser supremo,' 'conceito,' 'escrúpulo,' são meramente expressões idealísticas, especulativas e mentais, os conceitos aparentemente do indivíduo isolado, as meras imagens de grilhões e limitações muito empíricas, dentro das quais se move o modo de produção de vida e a forma de intercurso conjugada com ele."[17] A voz satírica e mordaz em "Sua Excelência" é dele que "oscilava entre o materialismo e o idealismo."[18] Pendurado entre as classes—a origem e prisão do desclassificado, do irônico, do diabólico—o autor tem uma tendência progressista mas não caminha a linha revolucionária de explodir o círculo vicioso do capitalismo burguês pela ação da classe trabalhadora.

A contribuição feita por Lima Barreto com "Sua Excelência," e muita da sua tamanha escritura, é ele trabalhar o efluxo cotidiano e alguns dos problemas tópicos do período. Como diz um crítico brasileiro, o tratamento de Lima Barreto das circunstâncias históricas atuais é "uma forma de estabelecer um processo crítico para a época e de possibilitar uma dialética entre ficção e fato, entre ficção e história, entre ficção e raízes do Brasil presente."[19] As vascilações e contradições de Lima Barreto relembram o caráter pequeno burguês de outras organizaçẽs e partidos críticos que pretendiam guiar o trabalhador para além do sonho e mais tarde não superaram o reformismo já marcante em Lima Barreto.

E quanto à questão de se Lima Barreto sacrifica o belo ao real ou não, basta ver que tal dicotomia inevitavelmente representa um sacríficio para o crítico liberal burguês na mesma maneira que representa uma unidade para o escritor pequeno burguês tendencioso.

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NOTAS

1. Antônio Cândido, "Os olhos, o barco e o espelho," *O Estado de São Paulo*, 17 outubro 1976, Suplemento Cultural.

2. *Os Bruzundangas* (Rio de Janeiro: Jacintho Ribeiro dos Santos Editor); *Histórias e Sonhos* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Editora de Gianlorenzo Schettino).

3. *Histórias*, p. 11.

4. Vincent Duggan, "Social Themes and Political Satire in the Short Stories of Lima Barreto," tese, City University of New York, 1976, p. v.

5. *Os Bruzundangas*, pp. 32, 36.

6. *Os Bruzundangas*, p. 32.

7. *Histórias*, p. 27. Citações subseqüentes desta edição aparecem documentadas em parentêses no texto do estudo.

8. Para detalhes dos turnos de Lima Barreto com loucura e alcoolismo, veja a biografia sensitiva por Francisco de Assis Barbosa, *A Vida de Lima* Barreto, 3ª ed., (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1965).

9. Octávio Brandão, *Os Intelectuais Progressistas* (Rio de Janeiro: Organização Simões, 1956), p. 144.

10. Para as contradições na prática política de Lima Barreto, veja o ensaio de Astrojildo Pereira, "Posições Políticas de Lima Barreto," em *Crítica impura, autores e problemas* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1963), especialmente pp. 34–54; e para detalhes da propensidade de Lima Barreto pela marginalização social, veja o estudo de Antônio Arnoni Prado, *O Crítico e a Crise* (Rio de Janeiro: Cátedra, 1976), especialmente a 2ª parte.

11. Para a tese da irreconciliabilidade dos antagonismos entre as classes, veja V. I. Lenin, *The Ståte and Revolution* (Pequim: Foreign Language Press, 1965), especialmente o primeiro capítulo.

12. *Histórias*, "Amplius!" (prefácio), p. 11.

13. Carlos Nelson Coutinho, "O Significado de Lima Barreto na Literatura Brasileira," em *Realismo e Anti-Realismo na Literatura Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1972), p. 21.

14. M. Cavalcanti Proença, *Estudos Literários* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1974), p. 323.

15. Alfredo Bosi, *História Concisa da Literatura Brasileira* (São Paulo: Cultrix, 1974), p. 356.

16. Karl Marx e Frederick Engels, *German Ideology* (Moscou: Progress Publishers, 1976), p. 52; a tradução é minha.

17. Marx e Engels, p. 51.

18. Brandão, p. 144.

19. Norman Potter, estudo, s. t., apresentado à Conferência do Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literature, Universidade de Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Primavera 1977, ditografado, p. 6.

Uma leitura de "Confissões de um Caçador de Dinossauros"

Foi com prazer que tomei contacto com este livro "As Confissões de um Caçador de Dinossauros" de Miguel Barbosa. Uma leitura que me levou por paisagens a que Miguel Barbosa já me tinha habituado e que no entanto adquirem aqui um significado novo. Um verdadeiro recreio o penetrar na intimidade do personagem, um complexo ser que nos conduz à mais perturbadora teia que se possa imaginar. Um indivíduo dividido entre o real e o irreal, entre o ser e o não ser a ponto de se nos apresentar mesmo, em três fugidias e saborosas aparições na pele de um casaco de cabedal, pele simplesmente, um casaco sem corpo, que é ele próprio numa corporização de um tremendo ego que nos desnorteará ao longo da narrativa.

Entremos pois na teia. Uma teia é sempre uma coisa perigosa. E esta é nocturna. É uma teia que vem da noite dos tempos por dentro do inconsciente da personagem, que não é uma aranha mas um dinossauro. Por que dinossauro, um representante de uma espécie acabada? Provavelmente porque Miguel Barbos, no seu propósito de simbolizar o real e querendo ultrapassar a forma do objecto morto, como na sugestão do casaco de cabedal, procurou um símbolo que fosse uma verdadeira objectificação de um corpo para incarnar uma persosalidade que se sente excorraçada da vida, do tempo, da natureza. E assim no-la apresentará suportando o peso de uma espécie que já não existe. Que, por sinal, por não existir, nos surge logo de início portadora de um segredo. Tem o poder de se libertar da limitação da vida e da morte. Libertar-se da limitação da vida e da morte um escorraçado, um expulso, um ser que por assim dizer já acabou? Bem, este poder pode considerar-se um paradoxo porque, libertando-se de um domínio para que não há libertação, o pobre dinossauro, ao ultrapassar a morte, ao sair da medida de um limite que é uma ordem física, perceptivel, atinge-se numa outra medida que já não cabe na linha dos fenómenos inteligíveis porque na verdade a imagem que vemos fugir da morte não é um corpo vivo mas um cadáver.

Eis-nos portanto no reino do que não é controlável e é nesse reino, para além dele ou numa sua anterioridade, que vou tomando conhecimento e interpretando esta estranha personagem e as suas confissões, as suas aventuras.

Expulso de si pelas leis que regem o tempo, dividido entre a vida e a morte, fragmentado entre o eu e o ego, fugido de si e por si procurado, pelo caçador de dinossauros que é ele próprio que se persegue e que é a mãe que o devora, este ser é realmente um ser em desacordo com as leis da natureza, da vida e do tempo.

Assim é no domínio do ilógico, de extravagante, do surreal, caçador de si próprio caçado pelas armadilhas da vida—a começar pela armadilha do seu nascimento, da saída de um corpo que o dá à vida para depois o

devorar, o amor neste livro é sempre um sentimento carnívoro—assim é ilógico, dizia, que Miguel Barbosa no-lo apresenta como uma autêntica figura, o sujeito de um eu inventado que actua num jogo divertido como que inteiramente projectado do lado de fora do eu do narrador, numa misteriosa distância que é a carga interior desse semi fantasma que se move exteriormente através do psiquismo inconsciente da escrita, em que se sente o narrador como num entreabrir do texto, de um modo mais intenso quando é a mão poética que manipula um anseio purificador, dir-se-ia que apessoal em relação à personagem, que se fragmenta mais uma vez numa fuga, que será até um regresso à natureza, por exemplo em passos como o vô da libélula e sempre que se manifesta um desejo de evasão, de transmutação entre o réptil e o vegetal ou a terra ou a asa, orquídea, calcário, pássaro, que voando poeticamente parece abranger universalmente o mundo. Deve mesmo estar aí, nesse anseio, a coragem de ser livre que o dinossauro, como dinossauro e como caçador de si próprio,à busca do eu em permanente luta com o ego, que é o seu censor ariano—a ascendência do dinossauro é ariana—não consegue personificar.

Assistimos portanto, ao longo da narrativa, à diabólica dispersão do sujeito dinossauro, que é o sujeito e ao mesmo tempo o objecto onde se vai exercer a constante acção de censura desse ego inquisitorial, ditatorial. Porém não lhe basta estar dividido entre o eu e o ego porque o próprio eu é um ponto de interrogação. O eu gozador de um ser que assume a forma de homem mas cujo sexo psicológico se indetermina—outra forma de fragmentação—comprazendo-se por um lado na farra, e na farra obscena, na droga, no pornografia e por outro numa fraqueza feminina que não o deixa sequer tomar uma posição entre a mulher e a mãe, e que é a fraqueza de todas as mães Mendonças sacrificadas através do sangue da mãe Jandira que aliás o domina o castra.

Ele é pois a fraqueza das mães Mendonças sacrificadas—uma face apenas da mãe Jandira que na verdade é um dinossauro monstruoso, que o engole como o engole a mulher, outro ser sinistramente devorador e o pulso censor dos Schmidt, a consciência, o remorso, com a força omnipotente de uma Gestapo imortal, a ditadura que cada um transporta em si. O que ainda não chega. A fragmentação vai mais longe. Porque ele está vivo. E vivo permanece junto do caixão do tio Aroldo. Mas está morto. Representante de uma espécie desaparecida, como se viu. E morto, na sua condição de dinossauro que não existe há milhões de anos, já uma contradição entre a vida e a morte, torna essa contradição ainda mais extravagante porque é ele o morto, é ele o tio Aroldo que está no caixão que no entanto, por estar vivo, ultrapassa a dimensão da morte, não cabe no caixão. Fica com os pés de fora. E, com os pés de fora, continua a manifestar o seu desejo de evasão. Vêmo-lo fugir do caixão com os pretalhões da escola de samba para mais uma cachaçada fora de portas donde acaba por regressar cheiran a pó de arroz barato e a suor de homem, voltando a acaçapar-se dentro do caixão, enquanto a forma viva do dinossauro incarnada no sobrinho do morto volta ao mesmo tempo, cavalgada por um homossexual, Banho de

Descarga, e interrogando-se sobre se será uma prostituta—sempre a fragmentação do desgraçado dinossauro, castrado pela mãe, sorvido pelo passado que o devora já antes de nascer, como é sorvido, absorvido pela mãe que, para melhor o assimilar, logo de criança o veste de rapariga, lhe fura as orelhas. Serei mulher? Já serei mulher? grita o infeliz dinossauro, indeciso na sua condição de homem, sempre vacilante na posição que há-de escolher na vida, sem saber se se incline para a mãe se para a mulher, puxado pelas duas numa desagregação do eu que seria trágica se não fosse cómica, porque a veia jocosa do narrador, muitas vezes embebida de uma forte carga de crítica social, é a boca escancarada de uma gargalhada, frequentemente uma careta, que se desdobra nos mais inverosímeis esgares por dentro da narrativa. Enquanto o pobre dinossauro, carregando a sua asfixia ancestral e presente, vai passando manipulado pelos cordelinhos da história, atabafado por fantasmas, o fantasma do tio Aroldo, que é ele próprio, o do tio Honório, o homem das acções, dos prédios, do dinheiro da família, outra forma de domínio, o tio Angenor, o tio Willy, o padre Abelardo, o homossexual que o persegue no confessionário e que no fundo também mostra um desejo de ascensão. Não toma ele a forma de um pterodáctilo, com as suas membranas entre os dedos, tentativa em embrião de réptil voador, pronto para levantar voo na ave futura? Como se vê, sempre a fragmentação e um permanente estado de evasão e de queda participando na natureza de eus e vegetando como homem, um homem castrado por uma mãe devoradora, que não é crocodilo mas dinossauro. Ele possuído pela mãe, ele possuído por Lobélia, a mulher, uma sugadora sinistra a quem ele se dá mas sem parecer sentir o prazer de usufruir. Sempre a sua incapacidade de viver. Vêmo-lo, ao longo de toda a narrativa, não como um perseguidor de mulheres mas um perseguido pela mulher, pelas mulheres—a D. Anónima Flor, a prima Nair, a titia Creusa, a mãe Jandira, a mulher Lobélia. Reflexo louco das imagens ferozes que o engolem, que o engolem com a sofreguidão que se reflecte imagem divertida no espelho limite do mundo visível como uma visão inconcebível, como inconcebível é vida, é a natureza e é Deus com as suas múltiplas e indecifráveis faces.

Para terminar, mostrando mais uma vez o aspecto indeciso da sua pessoa, consequência certamente da indeterminação do sexo psicológico, patenteia-nos como suprema manifestação da sua fraqueza e ao mesmo tempo do desejo de evasão, que sempre o acompanha, o anseio de regressar ao ventre materno, e entretanto recusa-se a lá entrar—mão mordo, mãe mordo.

Na realidade, a tragédia do filho da mãe possessiva, que não permite que o sexo se lhe defina. Mas isto contado com grandes gesto, histriónicos numa catadupa de troça por entre fundos gritos dramáticos em que se debatem o remorse e o sentimento de culpa, outra característica dos filhos da mãe castradora.

Noémia Seixas

Encontro no quarto escuro

Nadja caminha entre as aléias do cemitério e sabe que engravidou. Foi na casa do Ministro, numa festa em que havia um quarto fechado onde aconteceu Nadja brincar com um Fulano que apareceu tão sedutor que ela disse para si mesma ele me tenta cada vez que olha com esses olhos de loucura, ele tem uma insanidade tão estética que me faz pensar que bom seria se esse momento se eternizasse e eu não tivesse mais o dia de amanhã assim precisado de concatenar fusos de amor e desamor e fosse eu tão-só este agora com este homem lindo de coxas rijas e este olhar de mel e pimenta e lábios que sabem beijar como me beijam neste momento em que eu me entrego como um animal sem falhas a contabilizar, um discurso fluido do corpo que começa a se declarar pois os botões já estão se abrindo sozinhos, somos uma só carne diz a Biblia mas eu não quero pensar em Biblia logo agora que eu começo a adivinhar um gozo fatal.

—Somos mortais—ele anuncia.

—No entanto virgens ainda—eu respondo úmida.

E no quarto trancado nós dois na mais completa escuridão, não queríamos acender suspeitas porque ele me contou então que era o filho do Ministro, então eu me lembrie de tê-lo visto numa foto na coluna do Zózimo, ele estava acompanhado de uma loura muito nórdica que tinha um nome complicado com muito T e P, sei lá eu disse pra ele, não sei de nada, quero apenas descansar no teu peito (que por sinal tinha uns pêlos ruivos), porque agora a ardência já acabou, fizemos rápido mas nos saciou, que história louca eu balbuciei e ele perguntou hein e disse que estava com muito sono mas que não poderia dormir, a mulher dele estava na festa, devia já estar procurando por ele, ou quem sabe eu disse, quem sabe ela ainda nem notou a tua ausência, ele respondeu ela me adora. Mas não se levantou, continuou ali, deitado por um largo tempo onde conversamos coisas que me davam uma espécie de cócegas.

Ele estava ali, nu, com as espáduas erguidas como uma boa personagem de Scott Fitzgerald. Ele estava ali sim, dizendo que era o filho do Ministro e que queria que eu soubesse da sua vida. Lembrei-me abruptamente de que eu tinha sido presa em 1970 e que eu estivera por um fio da morte. Apalpei a minha cicatriz e senti que eu desejava o homem. Ele tinha uma elegância no ar. Me dizia que também ele desejava que este momento não morresse e que nós permanecêssemos ali como condenados. Eu me senti ferida. E falei que eu não queria o êxtase da condenação. Falei do Sarte do *Huis clos*. Ele falou que tinha estudado em Columbia e que tinha conhecido Marcuse numa festa. Marcuse comentava a "Consciência infeliz". Na festa também estava Bogdanovich com a namorada. Só que ele não tinha conseguido falar com o Bogdanovich. Tentou se aproximar mas acabou se aproximando mesmo foi da namorada. Bogdanovich olhava o relógio insistentemente.

Este homem aqui que eu desejo não sabe que eu sofro. Sei que choro por dentro. Erma. E digo para ele que eu o desejo. Passo a mão pela vagina e

sinto arder. Os meus cabelos pubianos se eriçam mas só eu vejo. Há uma lua detrás da janela. Eu quero, grita uma voz aqui dentro. Eu quero—eu suplico. Ele ouve a minha voz e já está vestido. Vamos—ele diz.

Mas eu digo não, não vamos não, vamos ficar aqui mais um pouco, quero que você ouça a minha história, a minha história não tem Marcuse nem Bogdanovich, mas tem um homem que me deu sete punhaladas no coração, e este homem não existe mais, este homem é meu. Quer ver? Meu nome é Matilde, Matilde Osório. Nasci cedo, quando no interior do Rio Grande toda criança pastava. Desde cedo compreendi que ser mulher é um problema ontológico. Como ser homem também é. Entende? Entende que não há alienação possível do nosso corpo? Entende amor? E quando eu disse amor eu vi na pouca luz que vinha da lua que ele se sentiu tonto e precisou de apoio com a cabeça no meu colo. Eu não tive receio de passar as mãos sobre os seus cabelos negros e lisos e que bem pareciam azulados pela luz da lua. Você me entende amor?—eu supliquei. Acho que ele disse meu monstro. Meu monstrinho, eu solucei. Seu corpo cheirava a esperma novo. Pouco conseguíamos ver de nós. A luz apagada e pelo silêncio parecia não haver festa na casa do Ministro, cheguei a pensar que tinham morrido. Todos. E peguei a mão dele e toquei-a na minha cicatriz. Ele estremeceu e disse por quê? Eu sabia se eu falasse da minha prisão ele ia me odiar. E no entanto confessei. Bogdanovich olhava insistentemente o relógio. Mas a namorada dele parecia muito desperta e queria comentários. Eu então comentei que achava o namorado dela um pouco duro, de poucos amigos. Ela respondeu que nada, é só hoje. Isso passa, eu arrematei. Bogdanovich não gosta de frituras nem de uísque. Dizem que cheira pó. Está azedo hoje, o Bogdanovich! Marcuse já é bem mais disposto, senta e conversa sobre a "Consciência infeliz", passa as mãos pelos cabelos cinzas e sempre tem motivos para uma conversa nova. Ele boceja mas não aparenta o mínimo cansaço. Diz que gosta de reuniões sociais. Admite que se prepara a tarde inteira, escova a roupa, o sapato, dá banho no cão. Não, não, o cão não o acompanha nas festas. Ele apenas se dispõe a lavá-lo. O cão chafurda na bacia d'água, morde as mãos de Marcuse, dizem os mais sensíveis que chega a rir. Eu nunca vi cão nenhum rir. Como pode um cão rir sem a mínima flexibilidade com a boca? Como pode, eu retruquei, como pode, como pode, como pode. Eu vi os seus dentes claros de espanto. Você se espanta porque eu te quero? Ele nada respondeu, fechou os lábios. Eu passei as unhas pelos seus lábios. E cantei baixinho uma canção de ninar. Ele disse que se lembrava. Quando eu ia perguntar de quê que ele se lembrava eu notei que ele estava novamente nu. Como eu.

Jõao Gilberto Noll
O Cego e a Dançarina

MELAR LA NOCHE

La noche negra con pétalos,
Ostral de daños ocultos,
Olores bañan un mundo,
Al llevar dentro mi vuelo.

Luego yo mielo la noche,
Por aberturas del día,
Para que cante la noche,
La luz de mi melodía.

BAJO LA CALLE

Bajo la calle,
En la orilla del pueblo,
Las moscas vienen,
Los ojos compuestos,
Espejos quebrados,
Mil pozos colorados hundidos en el viento.

Niños.
El silencio.
El paredón secando.

James Farrell
University of California,
Los Angeles

